

A CRITICAL STUDY

107

OF

JOHANN ELIAS SCHLEGEL'S AESTHETIC
AND DRAMATIC THEORY

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Thesis submitted for the Ph.D. degree, January 1943

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Abstract of thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

by

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'A critical study of Johann Elias Schlegel's aesthetic and
dramatic theories'

The thesis attempts to shew that J. E. Schlegel was the first German writer to analyse the nature of art and its effects from an aesthetic point of view. Hitherto the only writer who had made a systematic study of the problem was Gottsched, but his approach was a purely practical one and the standards by which he judged art were chiefly those of practical reality. In order to shew how it happened that, despite his aesthetically worthless writings, Gottsched yet wielded a unique authority on literary questions, Chapter I contains a brief survey of writers before Gottsched who had discussed similar problems in a manner inherently more valid than his, and whose work yet remained without influence.

Schlegel's views are measured against Gottsched's, since his was, then, the only poetic theory which counted when Schlegel began writing. The chief mark of the latter's more aesthetic approach is that he accepts the existence of great works of art and tests his theories by them, if necessary modifying the theories; whereas Gottsched tests the works by the principles. Hence Schlegel accepts the imitation theory, but realises that art is always only a modified imitation of nature, affording different experiences from those afforded by reality. Were it merely a copy, affording identical experiences, art would be superfluous. The deviations from nature which the artist makes are due partly to the laws imposed upon him by his medium, partly to the necessity of ensuring that his work gives rise to the right kind of experience.

Chapter III relates Schlegel to later writers and to later developments in aesthetics. He is usually regarded as a forerunner of Lessing, but it is claimed here that this is true only of his more practical suggestions for the drama. Each has a totally different approach to the problem of art. Gottsched,

Lessing, Bodmer and Breitinger, the Sturm und Drang, different as they are in other respects, all tend to confuse art and life. Schlegel distinguishes between them and, in this more aesthetic approach, he is closer to Mendelssohn and to Goethe and Schiller. Many of Schlegel's views are borne out, too, by the most recent developments in aesthetics, especially his realisation of the importance of medium and of the existence of a specifically aesthetic experience.

PREFACE

The original title of this thesis was "Johann Elias Schlegel's dramatic theory and practice". Its aim was to give a systematic analysis of Schlegel's dramatic theory as an integral part of his general aesthetic, and to throw some light on the relation of his theory to his practice. Neither the chronological method followed by Antoniewicz, nor the complete separation of the dramatic from the aesthetic theory adopted by other critics, brought out what seemed to me the most interesting thing about Schlegel's work: the consistent unity of approach in both theory and criticism made possible by his clearly defined view of art. And even preliminary investigations led me to suspect that the cleavage between theory and practice, which was usually attributed to conservatism or failing courage, was much more likely to be due to lack of dramatic talent, and that the plays, and more especially the unfinished sketches and projects, do in fact provide an illuminating commentary to his theory. In addition I wished to facilitate comparison of Schlegel's work with that of his predecessors and contemporaries, and I intended therefore to sketch a background against which he might be measured.

As I worked, however, my attention was held ever more exclusively by the aesthetic theories, and it seemed to me that their significance had not been fully revealed. This was due partly to the fact that most of the work on Schlegel was done towards the end of the last century, that is before the important developments in the study of aesthetics which have taken place during the last thirty or forty years; partly, however, to the methods adopted in dealing with his theory. The method of taking remarks at random and attempting to estimate their value without reference to the whole is not fitted to bring out the full import of a theory whose most conspicuous merit is its homogeneity. In view of the length which the thesis now threatened to assume, and of the fact that it would thus fall into two quite distinct parts each having an independent argument, I was tempted to concentrate on a critical estimate of the aesthetic and dramatic theory, and to let the sections on dramatic practice go, although I had collected a great deal of material for them, especially for that dealing with the importance of Schlegel's plays for the theatre. Difficulties of obtaining books under war-time conditions finally settled the question for me. Many of the books required to complete the chapters on the plays and their performance in the theatre were unobtainable, and I decided to submit the thesis in its present form. It now has a threefold aim:-

II.

1. To provide a background against which Schlegel's theory may be measured. Chapter I does not make pretence of being anything like a complete survey of poetic theory in the period before Schlegel began writing. It is deliberately selective, and special stress has been laid on Gottsched's theories and his general approach to art with the object of making clear the precise nature of Schlegel's advance over him.

2. To give a detailed analysis of Schlegel's aesthetic theories and of his application of these to the art of drama. What interested me was, not the origin of these theories, but the direction in which they pointed, and the detailed treatment is due to a desire to state clearly and precisely what Schlegel knew of the nature of art, its creation and its effects.

3. To try to estimate the intrinsic value of Schlegel's views, and to shew to what spiritual line he belongs in the growing understanding of art in eighteenth century Germany.

The edition of Gottsched's Critische Dichtkunst referred to throughout is the 2nd (1737) which is in the library of University College, London. I have unfortunately not been able to use this edition during the final revision.

In conclusion my thanks are due to Professor Edna Purdie who suggested the title of the thesis and without whose unfailing help and encouragement it could never have been written. I should also like to acknowledge my indebtedness to the stimulus of a course of lectures on aesthetics given by Professor Susan Stebbing.

E.M.W.

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CHAPTER I

THE EXPOSITION OF AESTHETIC AND DRAMATIC
THEORY IN GERMANY BEFORE SCHLEGEL

Gottsched's influence and authority.

In the 1770 edition of his translation of Batteux' Traité des beaux arts réduits à un même principe Johann Adolf Schlegel wrote concerning the period when he and his brother J.E. Schlegel were students in Leipzig: "Mein sel. Bruder and ich setzten beide, sobald wir die Akademie betraten, den Entschluss bei uns fest, bei dem sel. Gottsched keine Collegia zu besuchen, und das zwar, damit wir ihm keinen Anlass geben könnten, uns für seine Schüler zu halten."¹ Memory may become blurred during a lapse of thirty years, and this account, if not wholly inaccurate, is certainly coloured by the recollection of subsequent events.² Nevertheless the very distortion bears striking testimony to the influence which Gottsched wielded at that time, for J.A. Schlegel accounts for their decision as follows: "Denn aus verschiedenen Beyspielen wussten wir bereits, dass dieser Mann die Schwachheit habe jeden, der seine akademischen Vorlesungen angehört, sobald er in seiner Denkungsart von ihm abwich, für einen undankbaren Schüler anzusehen....." a contingency to be avoided even at the cost of missing his lectures.

Nor, it would appear, was the wish to avoid such a contingency unreasonable. Evidence is not lacking that Gottsched did possess influence which could have practical consequences of an unpleasant nature, influence which derived from his office and public position. Some of this evidence comes again from J.A. Schlegel. Under the pseudonym of Orontes he writes in 1745 to Bodmer: "Wenn Sie daraus, dass ich Gottscheden nicht bekannt werden mag, schliessen, dass Gottsched schaden kann: so gebe ich Ihnen dasselbe zu. Er kann mir

- 1 Herrn Abt Batteux Einschränkung der schönen Künste auf einen einzigen Grundsatz übersetzt und mit verschiedenen damit verwandten Abhandlungen begleitet von J. Adolf Schlegel, Leipzig, 1770, II, pp. 516ff. As Danzel (Gottsched und seine Zeit, Leipzig, 1848, p. 154) points out, these remarks could not appear until after Gottsched's death and are therefore not to be found in the 1751 edition.
- 2 Cf. Danzel, op. cit., pp. 154 - 158. J.A. Schlegel does admit, it may be noted, that he and his brother attended Gottsched's Rednergesellschaft. (op. cit., p. 516).

als Bürger, aber nicht als Kritikus schaden." ¹ Schlegel further relates that Gottsched's reply to critical attacks from one young man had taken the form of complaints to the author's father: "... er rufte die väterliche Gewalt wider den Sohn zu Hülfe..... Sie sehen daraus, wie sich Hr. Prof. Gottsched auf kritische Einwürfe verantwortet, und wie sehr man sich vor seinem Zorne hüten muss, wenn man nicht Himmel und Hölle wider sich aufgebieten haben will." Other evidence comes from J.C. Rost writing, again to Bodmer, in 1743.² He tells how Gottsched, angered by his poem Das Vorspiel, had made things so unpleasant for him that he would have to leave Saxony, all prospects of advancement, even of livelihood, being now closed to him.

This aspect of Gottsched's influence is very real and, as the dates of these letters show, he still had power to harm even after his literary reputation had suffered in the controversy with the Swiss. One wonders whether perhaps J.E. Schlegel's conciliatory attitude towards Gottsched during the years immediately following his departure from Leipzig was not partly due to the fact that his brother Adolf still remained there, and to a desire to avoid exposing him to any unpleasant consequences which open opposition to Gottsched might have produced.

But real as this aspect of Gottsched's power undoubtedly is, it is by no means a complete account of the influence which he possessed from 1730 onwards for more than a decade. During those years he spoke on literary matters with the voice of authority, and an authority which had not been achieved merely by petty intrigue or the misuse of influence arising from his official position as professor. It had more real and more solid foundations, and even later opponents pay tribute to it. On the 28. March, 1738, Bodmer wrote to Gottsched about the difficulties of correspondence: " Diesen Mangel müssen mir inzwischen die artigen und gründlichen Schrifften ersetzen, womit Sie das Publikum zu bereichern niemals müde werden.....von Ihnen hat die deutsche Gesellschaft ihr Wesen und Leben; von Ihnen dürfen wir die Einführung der Teutschen Tragödie hoffen. Haben wir einmal diese, so wird die Oper von sich selbst

1 see Litterarische Pamphlete aus der Schweiz nebst Briefen an Bodmern, Zürich, 1781, pp. 80ff. The letter is dated 30. October, 1745. A similar remark occurs in a letter of 30. July, 1746, signed Pottelwitz, another pseudonym used by J.A. Schlegel (Ibid., p. 93).

2 Letter dated 4. December, 1743 (Ibid., pp. 68 ff.).

fallen....."¹ And in July of the same year Bodmer wrote again: "Da ich meine Aufnahme in die deutsche Gesellschaft als eine Wirkung dero persönlicher Wohlgelegenheit gegen mir ansehen muss, so habe ich um so mehr Ursache mir angelegen sein zu lassen, dass ich mich dieser Wahl würdig mache." In this year, too, Pyra, a later opponent, not only sends work to Gottsched, but expresses an apparently sincere desire to have his criticism, and in the next year we find Breitinger doing likewise.

At this time, as at no other in German literature, the field is dominated by one man. If one is looking for a background of literary theory against which to measure J.E. Schlegel, one may justifiably confine oneself to the works of Gottsched and to the journals published under his auspices. And yet neither his literary handbook,² nor even its timely appearance at a critical moment, are sufficient in themselves to explain the phenomenon. In Gottsched's extensive writings about literature there is little, if anything, which is of permanent validity, little indeed that could be even temporarily fruitful by pointing a new direction. Nevertheless his authority was of a kind as has rarely been wielded by any academic figure. It differs sharply, for instance, despite resemblances in aims and achievements, from that of an earlier Literaturorganisator³, Opitz.

No less than Gottsched, Opitz had a keen sense of the needs of the time. The most pressing need then was to bridge the gap between "cultured" literature, which was in Latin, and popular literature written in the native German tongue, and Opitz set to work to do this with all the patriotic fervour which Gottsched in his turn brought to his particular tasks. And the two main problems which Opitz had to solve before he could achieve his aim - the social rehabilitation of the poet and the creation of a German language which was malleable and capable of expressing thought - are not in kind different from those which faced Gottsched. Both are of a technical-practical nature. Again, Opitz' versatility is reminiscent of Gottsched. It expresses itself in a widely varied

1 All these letters are cited by Danzel, op. cit., pp. 191-194.

2 Versuch einer Critischen Dichtkunst vor die Deutschen von Joh. Christoph Gottsched, Leipzig, 1731, referred to in the following pages as C.D.

3 The term is Richard Alewyn's (Vorbarocker Klassizismus und Griechische Tragödie. Analyse der -"Antigone"- Uebersetzung des Martin Opitz. Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher, 1926).

activity, extending from translations of the ancients to the editing of the Annolied, and including adaptations of Italian opera; but all of it, without exception, is to be considered chiefly as a series of experiments in the use and practice of the language and so, as in Gottsched, theory and practice fuse, each complementing the other. In accordance with his conscious efforts towards reform, Opitz, too, produced a book of guidance for others; and, although the rules which he suggests in this Buch von der deutschen Poeterey¹ are very external in character, yet his insistence on their use had an undoubted effect in making the language a more fitting medium for poetry.

In many respects then Opitz resembles Gottsched. As regards subsequent fate and reputation he clearly surpasses him. Opitz was acclaimed during his lifetime;² after his death his fame did not suffer; rather was it enhanced. Das Buch von der deutschen Poeterey remained the standard literary text-book until ousted by Gottsched's Critische Dichtkunst, and for a hundred years Opitz was accepted by his countrymen as the representative German poet. Bodmer and Breitinger championed him and even attempted to win for his poetry a lively interest and appreciation instead of the mere reverence accorded to a great but outworn tradition. The lack of response which their new edition of his work³ called forth indicates that this had long since lost its appeal; but neither then, nor later, did his reputation suffer any reverse. He remained the Father of German poetry. Even Gottsched himself felt the necessity of making his own reforms appear a continuation of the Opitz tradition, of placing himself, as it were, in the direct line of succession. This is the underlying theme of the panegyric which he pronounced on the centenary of Opitz' death.⁴ How cleverly does he omit reference to points of

- 1 Martini Opitii Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey, Bresslau, 1624.
- 2 Cf. Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, 24, p.370: "Dichter, die an Umfang und Kraft ihrer natürlichen Anlage wie an künstlerischem Sinne ihm weit überlegen waren, haben verehrungsvoll wie zu einem unerreichbaren Genius zu ihm aufgeblickt, und sich willig zu unbedingtem Gehorsam seinen Gesetzen unterworfen."
- 3 Martin Opitzens von Boberfeld Gedichte. Von J.J.B. und J.J.B. besorget. Erster Theil. Zürich, 1745. No further parts appeared but a second edition of this part was published in 1755.
- 4 Lob - und Gedächtnisrede auf den Vater der deutschen Dichtkunst, Martin Opitzen von Boberfeld, im Jahre 1739 auf der philosophischen Catheder zu Leipzig gehalten von Johann Christoph Gottscheden, Leipzig, 1739. Gottsched cites here a long list of tributes to Opitz, including those by Fleming, Heinsius and Grotius.

policy wherein he differs from Opitz; we find no mention, for instance, of the latter's achievements in the sphere of opera. Gottsched shews himself a pastmaster in the art of propaganda with all its subtleties of selection and omission.

How sharply all this contrasts with Gottsched's subsequent fate is well-known. Yet, while it lasted, the authority of Gottsched was more powerful, more extensive and of a different quality from that of Opitz. It made inroads into practical life in a way that that of Opitz had never done. What was the reason for this?

The reason is to be found chiefly, perhaps, in the different public to which each made his appeal. Opitz' reforms were disseminated chiefly by numerous literary societies which sprang up during the first half of the century and created among the academically educated classes an interest in German poetry.¹ He was consciously concerned with academic and professional and court circles and interested in the academic aspect of literature. Gottsched, on the other hand, was concerned with the rôle which literature might play in bringing about moral improvement in people. He consciously addresses himself to as wide a public as possible - a reading public which scarcely existed at the time of Opitz. With his periodicals he appeals to the mass of the middle-class; with the Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen² he deliberately extends his propaganda to women, and does it indeed extremely well.³ Moreover, by his intimate association with the theatre, Gottsched created a link between the academic and the practical world. If Opitz had assured the social position of the poet, Gottsched attempted to do the same for the actor and thereby to open up a new channel through which his literary reforms might reach yet wider sections of the community and effect in them that moral improvement which was his ultimate goal. In this way he reached a far wider public than Opitz; wider, not only in the sense of numerically greater, but also as regards diversity of classes and types.

- 1 Cf. Willi Fleming (Das schlesische Kunstdrama. Deutsche Literatur in Entwicklungsreihen. Reihe Barock. Barockdrama, I, Leipzig, 1930, p. 11) "nicht die Fürsten sind der eigentliche Stamm des Publikums, sondern die gebildete Aristokratie....auch die höhere Beamtenschaft.... Durch das Gymnasium ist Dichter wie Publikum gegangen."
- 2 Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen. Halle und Leipzig, 1725, 1726.
- 3 G. Bélouin (De Gottsched à Lessing, Paris, 1909) is right when he claims (p. 49) that this periodical is the best thing that Gottsched ever wrote.

Gottsched's Critische Dichtkunst was, as we have said, able to oust Das Buch von der deutschen Poeterey as the standard text book. With this work Gottsched appears quite consciously as teacher and law-giver. With it he becomes, as Danzel says, "der Chorführer der deutschen Literatur und zwar nicht nur in dem Sinne, dass er sie äusserlich beherrscht, sondern auch in dem tieferen, dass er was ihr Noth that am besten sah."¹ We might, then, expect that this book was an isolated phenomenon in the early part of the century, or that it contained views of greater originality and validity than those expressed elsewhere. This is not the case.

At the turn of the century Christian Weise had expressed views on drama which very closely resemble those held by Gottsched. As in Gottsched's case, the expression of these views did not spring from any interest in theoretical speculation but from practical requirements. In his profession as schoolmaster he wished to provide his pupils with suitable plays to act; plays which would contrast in every way with the high-flown creations of the second Silesian school, the improbable intrigues and exaggerated phrasing of Lohenstein. Hence he demanded a strict naturalism in action and speech; each character was to speak in the way in which a person of his class would speak in real life. He even carried his zeal for naturalism to the point of choosing from among his pupils those who, in real life, belonged to the class they were to portray in the play.²

Weise justified this naturalistic trend by assuming drama to be as close an imitation of reality as possible. He applied to it the commonsense criteria of everyday life. Thus his rejection of verse in drama appeals to the authority of ordinary conversational usage: "ich finde keinen casum im menschlichen Leben, da die Leute miteinander Verse machen."³ It is interesting to note that not only is this demand reiterated by Gottsched, but the same arguments in support of it are advanced by his pupil, Straube, in the controversy with Elias Schlegel on comedy in verse. Weise applies similar criteria to opera. Arias are to be found in his plays - but not as a concession to a more aesthetic view of drama. He includes them on

1 Danzel, op. cit., p. 185.

2 Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, 41, pp. 527 - 528.

3 Ibid., p. 528.

grounds akin to those which determined his rejection of verse:
 "Wenn ich etwas von Arien eingemischet habe, so wird ein jedweder wissen, dass die Leute zum Zeitverträibe oft ein Lied singen."¹

Weise's insistence on naturalism as a reaction against Schwulst had an intrinsic value. But in practice the value of it was lost because the reach of his influence was limited to school productions, and he was unable to do anything to bridge the unnatural gap which had for so long yawned between literature and the living theatre of the people. The union of these two had to wait until chance brought about the happy association of Gottsched and the Neubers.

Since Weise's view of drama was so like his own we might expect that Gottsched would look back on him sympathetically as a promising forerunner. But he does nothing of the kind. Far from finding a word of praise for his attempts, Gottsched criticises his work severely. Not primarily interested at all in ideas or in the theory of literature, but in aims - and very practical and definite aims - Gottsched completely overlooks the similarity in their crude interpretation of imitation and probability and perceives only how different was the net result of Weise's achievement from what he himself desired. Weise's dramas, because of his realistic aims, have a distinctly popular flavour. They are full of coarse expressions and turns of speech. His tragedies abound in realistic death scenes, distressing executions, while his comedies rely largely for their effect on pranks and jokes in the Pickelhäring tradition, or on riotous slapstick.

Gottsched however had in view not the schoolboys of a small town, but a whole nation. And his aim was not solely the improvement of dramatic and histrionic talent, but moral and cultural reform on a grand scale. Drama was only one medium whereby he hoped to attain this end. But if drama was to play its full part in the general scheme it must be far different from the coarse popular drama savouring of the soil which Weise had produced. It must emulate the drama of the most highly civilised and cultured nation of Europe - France - and above all it must be, as regards morals and manners, completely above reproach. That Gottsched was fully aware of how his predecessors had failed to achieve this is shown by a

¹ Ibid., p. 528.

review in an early number of the Critische Beyträge. He writes there: "Allein, ich weis nicht woher es gekommen ist, dass so emsig sie auch gewesen sind, die schönen Wissenschaften bekannt zu machen, und in Aufnehmen zu bringen, sie doch die Schauspielkunst so gar verlassen haben..... diese schien allein ihrer Bemühungen unwürdig zu seyn. Sie lasen die Anleitungen und Meisterstücke der Alten nur um des Wortverstandes willen. Sie bewunderten dieselben mehr wegen der Verfasser, als wegen der innerlichen Vortrefflichkeit. Sie wendeten sie zwar zum Unterrichte der Schuljugend in den gelehrten Sprachen, aber nicht zur allgem^{en}Besserung des Willens, oder zur Nachahmung an Die Schaubühne blieb also in ihrer Niedrigkeit, und ein Raub der Thorheit, wie sie gewesen war. Diejenigen, welche ihren gerechten Eifer wieder dieselbe ausschütteten, glaubten sich daher um so viel mehr berechtigt, sie ihrer Natur nach vor et~~was~~ höchstschädliches zu halten : Je weniger die Gelehrten durch Untersuchung der Kunst und Verfertigung regelmässiger und sinnreicher Stücke diesen Irrthum zu widerlegen suchten. Hätten diese sich ihrer eher angenommen; hätten sie den Deutschen die Augen auf gethan..... hätten sie gewiesen, dass man den Zuschauer nicht nothwendig zum Laster verführe und in der Tugend stöhre; und dass nicht die Ergetzung allein.....sondern auch der Nutzen und die Anleitung zur philosophischen Tugend der Endzweck der Schauspiele sey..... so würde sie sich viel eher gehoben, und ein vieles von der Verachtung verlohren haben. Ja man würde vielleicht dadurch vielen Unordnungen abgeholfen haben, welche die spielenden Personen selbst verächtlich, und dadurch die an sich gute Sache unwerth machten."¹

Weise, then, did not succeed in exerting any influence and was never regarded by Gottsched as a precursor in whose tradition he might profitably continue - this despite a similarly crude interpretation which each put upon the theory of imitation of nature.

- 1 Beyträge zur Critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache. Poesie und Beredsamkeit. herausgegeben von einigen Mitgliedern der deutschen Gesellschaft in Leipzig, IX, vol.3, pp. 4 ff. This periodical is referred to throughout the following as C.B.

But the eighteenth century before Gottsched was not without a protagonist of a quite different view of the relation between art and reality. The quarrel between Elias Schlegel and Straube as to whether verse might be used for comedy is again foreshadowed, but this time it is Schlegel's arguments that are anticipated, not those of Straube. In 1708, the year in which Weise wrote that arias may be included in drama because people do in actual life sometimes sing to amuse themselves, Berthold Feind made the following remark on the same subject: "Die Arien sind fast in der Oper die Erklärung des Recitatifs - das zierlichste und künstlichste der Poesie - und der Geist und die Seele des Schauspiels."¹ This delicate and sensitive perception of the true function of the aria implies an utterly different idea of the nature of drama itself.

For Feind, art (as embodied in opera) and reality are two different worlds and therefore not to be judged by the same standards. The commonsense criteria which may, and often must, be applied in practical life cannot be applied to drama. Feind cites St. Evrémond: "Peut-on s'imaginer qu'un Maître appelle son Valet, ou qu'il luy donne une commission en chantant.....qu'on exprime avec du chant les ordres qu'on donne, et que mélodieusement on tue les hommes à coups d'épée," and, as if conscious of his superior aesthetic position, answers him with appropriate scorn: "Mich daucht - ein Knabe - wenn er zum erstenmahl eine Opera lieset und siehet - fället gleich ein solches Urtheil - wenn man ihn - wie alle Zuschauer - zu überreden trachten würde - dass solches wahr - und der Poet durch seine Acteurs solches für etwas gantz natürliches ausgeben wollte - was eine Fiction seyn soll."² Drama is, then, a Fiction; by means of it, truth is represented symbolically and conventions, such as verse, present no difficulty. They are accepted as necessary features of this particular art-form: "Die Wahrheit wird in den Schau-Spielen durch Fictions vorgestellt - denn sonst müsten es keine Verse seyn - die man redet und absinget."²

Feind does not reject imitation of nature as a basis for drama but, in a way which reminds us of J.E. Schlegel, he limits the degree of imitation: "Man ahmet nur der Natur einigermaßen nach - und wer was gantz natürliches sehen will - dem giebt der grosse Schauplatz der Welt täglich neue Praesentationen - nicht aber der kleine - in Opern und Comödien."² He recognises, too, that one of the essential features of art, and one which prevents it from being

1 Barth. Feindes - Lt. Deutsche Gedichte - Sammt einer Vorrede von dem Temperament und Gemüths-Beschaffenheit eines Poeten und Gedancken von der Opera, Stade, 1708, p.95.

2 Ibid., p.77.

an exact reproduction of reality, is a conscious exaggeration, a heightening of effect: "Denn was ist wol das Singen anders als die Erhöhung der Rede und Stimme mit der höchsten Krafft und Nachdruck?"¹ In his protest that this is not in any way to be condemned as "unnatural" he again closely foreshadows Schlegel: "Eine erhöhte Rede aber bleibt darum doch eine Rede - ob sie gleich in einem andern Thon recitirt wird - und gar nicht etwas unnatürliches."

Feind warns against the slavish observation of rules and submission to authority: "Alle Regeln sind auch nicht gleich Gesetze - wie die Regeln zwar verhindern - dass einer kein méchanter Poet sey - aber nicht vermögend einen guten zu machen."² Questions of rules and probability rightly yield place to the far more important question of the effect on the spectator. This indeed is the ultimate criterion of whether a play is "probable" or "improbable". The emphasis is hence shifted from what is presented on to the impression produced. Thus Feind demands action on the stage, in the style of the English, rather than a reported account of it, as preferred by the French. The effect will depend entirely on how the action is presented: "Was ist doch wol grausames daran wenn siehet - wie eine Person sich ersticht - auf dem Stuhle in der Ferne sitzt -und den Kopff sincken lässt?"³ Only such actions are to be reported as admit of no softening or toning down in the manner of presentation on the stage.

A thing then is natural if it appears so to the spectator; its aim is not to deceive him into thinking that he sees reality, but to convince him of its own truth: "Das heist nun natürlich darstellen - wenn der Leser oder Zuschauer bey der Durchlesung oder Praesentation gerühret wird; wenn ihm die Sache in der That wahr zu seyn vorkömmt."⁴ With this Feind comes very close to the true conception of dramatic probability and aesthetic illusion, which, ignoring the question of whether the premises are probable from a practical point of view, demands only that the cumulative effect of the whole shall move and convince. His position, notwithstanding occasional lapses on to a lower plane, is thus far in advance of Hottsched's.

1 Ibid., p. 79.

2 Ibid., p. 92.

3 Ibid., pp. 106, 107.

4 Ibid., p. 108.

But, despite the validity of Feind's views, they carry no authority. His voice is completely drowned in the clamour of Gottsched's campaign against opera. The latter is able to consolidate the commonplace, commonsense, objections, so derided by Feind, into an officially accepted view. He is the first in Germany to attack opera from an aesthetic standpoint and he gets away with it. Why? Because, as so frequently, he senses the trend of the time. For, although it is true that he is the first to attack this form of drama on aesthetic grounds, middle-class reaction against court extravagance, including the opera, had found expression in moral protests since the turn of the century.¹ In the most timely way Gottsched now comes along with his theoretical attack. It is in the spirit of the age and hence triumphs over such views as Feind's which yet have more intrinsic value. With his keen sense of the need of the moment, Gottsched is able, not only to associate himself with the movement against opera, but to provide it with theoretical justification, with a manifesto - and a manifesto possessing the supreme merit of being easily understood by the man in the street.

The secret of Gottsched's success, in this matter as in many others, lies in his ability to establish contact between academic theory and the practical world. Bodmer objects just as strongly to opera and favours a kind of tragedy which might well have had a far greater popular success than the pallid imitations of Corneille evolved by Gottsched.² But he takes no practical steps to ensure either the removal of the one or the realisation of the other. Gottsched stepped beyond the confines of the theoretical into the sphere of the practical and he succeeded in obtaining as his ambassadors into this wider realm none other than a pair of middle-class actors - troupers travelling from one town to another and able to spread the gospel of Leipzig into the farthest corners of Germany. And that these ambassadors had no little faith in the possibility of ultimately ousting the opera

1 Cf. Willi Fleming (Deutsche Literatur in Entwicklungsreihen, Reihe Barock; Barockdrama, Bd. 5. Die Oper, Leipzig, 1933, p. 12): "Der gewaltige Aufwand für die Oper brachte manchen Fürsten an den Staatsbankrott und musste sittenrichterlichem Ernst wohl als eine Zeitseuche, als "Theatromania" erscheinen. So wundert es uns nicht, dass gleichzeitig mit dem Siege der Prunkoper auch ihre Bekämpfung auftritt. Erstaunen kann uns allein, in welcher Weise dies geschah. Rein moraltheologisch ist die Einstellung der Gegner."

2 Cf. Danzel, op. cit., pp. 188, 191.

and replacing it by regular drama is clearly shewn by the confident tone of the letter written to Gottsched by Johann Neuber on June 28, 1730, from Hamburg: "Die hiesigen Opern sind sehr schlecht und haben auch schlechte Einnahme, wir aber haben so viel Zuschauer als die itzigen Umstände erlauben.... Man muss Gedult haben mit der Zeit wird sichs geben."¹

Yet another work which appeared in the early part of the century and which, despite its intrinsic worth, had the same lack of practical effect as the writings of Weise and Feind is the treatise on taste by J. Ulrich König.² This has been claimed as Germany's first contribution to modern aesthetic theory. The value of the work lies rather in things said by the way than in the actual theory of taste which König evolved. The argument may be marred by awkward and unconvincing compromises, but in his intuitive flashes and conclusions König goes beyond anything which Gottsched ever said on the subject of taste.

He admits that taste can improve or can deteriorate, but he insists that the germ of it, the aptitude for appreciation, must be inborn and cannot be artificially manufactured. König draws attention to the sensuous element in taste, to the spontaneity and speed with which it operates, and emphasises the necessity of it in creation as well as in appreciation. This natural feeling can be weak or totally lacking even in the most intelligent and learned persons: "Es kan einer ein gelehrter und sonst belesener Mann in vielen Wissenschaften seyn; aber daraus folgt nicht, dass er den guten Geschmack auch nur im mindesten Grade besitze. Die natürliche Empfindung kan bey ihm schwach, oder der Eindruck mangelhaft seyn."³ König was undoubtedly right, but the official theory of taste during the next years was to ignore the part played by natural feeling and sense impressions and to assume that everything to do with either creation or appreciation can be instilled and, with due industry, acquired.

- 1 Quoted by J.F.V. Reden-Esbeck (Caroline Neuber und ihre Zeitgenossen, Leipzig, 1881), p. 94.
- 2 Des Freyherrn von Canitz Gedichte Nebst einer Untersuchung von dem guten Geschmack in der Dicht- und Rede-Kunst: ausgefertigt von Johann Ulrich König. Leipzig und Berlin, 1727.
- 3 Op. cit., p. 275.

When he attempts to reconcile general good taste, which is absolute and unvarying, with the different tastes to be found among different peoples at different times, König has to fall back on a commonplace; but it is important to note that he affirms the right of any one nation to its own taste. He goes further and points out that to attempt to force others to subscribe to our likes and dislikes is in itself an infringement of the rules of good taste. Equally important is his insistence that it is useless to dispute about the relative merits of two works which differ from each other in aim and method and to attempt to say which is in better taste: "Man muss daher nicht zweyerley verschiedene gute Schrifften einander entgegensetzen, sondern zwo von einerley Gattung.....sonst kan man freylich über den Geschmack nicht streiten."¹ Above all, he asserts, such disputes can never extend to medium: "Nicht weniger steht es in Dingen, welche den Geschmack des Verstandes betreffen, einem jeden frey, ob er gebundene oder ungebundene Schrifften lesen oder verfertigen;..... Ebenso kan man, nach dem Geschmack der äusserlichen Sinne, niemand deswegen tadeln, wenn er in Dingen des Gehörs, eine Geige oder eine Pfeiffe, ein Clavier oder eine Laute.....lieber höret."² We shall have occasion to recall this when we come to Schlegel's defence of comedy in verse.

König distinguishes nicely between the exercises of taste in the aesthetic and in the moral sphere and criticises du Tremblay in terms which might well apply to much of Gottsched's writings: "Ein Mitglied der Königl. Academie zu Angers, Herr Frayn du Tremblay, aber.....pflegt überall den Geschmack des Glaubens, des Willens oder der Sittenlehre, und des Verstandes dergestalt untereinander zu mischen, dass es scheint er habe weniger daselbst den Geschmack untersuchen, als vielmehr eine angenommene Frömmigkeit durch und durch zur Unzeit hervorblicken wollen."³

1 Ibid., p. 315.

2 Ibid., p. 297.

3 Ibid., p. 287. As Braitmaier (Geschichte der Poetischen Theorie und Kritik von den Diskursen der Maler bis auf Lessing, Frauenfeld, 1888, I, p. 59 ff.) has pointed out, König's difficulty is largely one of terminology.

While by no means without power of a certain kind - he was able, for instance, to cause Gottsched no little heart-burning and mental distress¹ - König's influence never extended beyond court and academic circles. His criticism of the German theatre runs along very similar lines to that of Gottsched.² He believed it to be in need of reforms of an extensive and drastic nature. He himself turned his attention to the revival of German comedy by adapting some of the plays of the théâtre de la foire and, before the break with Gottsched, he exerted himself on behalf of the Neubers. But he lacked Gottsched's insight into the needs of the time as also his singleness of purpose and energetic drive. König was the prototype of the servile court poet and what influence he had tended to dissipate itself in intrigue rather than in the spreading of ideas.

There remain two figures which we may not leave out of any account of Gottsched's authority because of the part which they were to play in overthrowing it. These are Bodmer and Breitinger. Now while it is true that these two were writing before anyone had ever heard of Gottsched, before he had even appeared in Leipzig, and although within a very short time they were to form the focal point for the gatherings of reaction against him, yet up to the end of the 30's there is no question at all of a challenge to his authority even from this direction. On the contrary, his approval is sought. This does not mean, however, that they agreed with Gottsched as to the kind of poets they liked and defended, nor that they merely echoed his views about the nature and creation of poetry. Their major works had, it is true, not yet appeared,³ but what they had already written far surpassed, both in appreciation and suggestiveness, anything that Gottsched could ever hope to produce. As early as 1721 in the

- 1 Cf. B. Litzmann, Christian Ludwig Liscow in seiner litterarischen Laufbahn, Hamburg u. Leipzig, 1883, pp. 129 ff. and Gottsched's letter to J.E. Schlegel of December 30, 1742, (Modern Language Review, XXXIV, 3, July 1939, pp. 403 ff.)
- 2 See a letter from König to Bodmer of May 15, 1725, cited by J.E. Reichel (Gottsched, Berlin, 1908, I, p. 512).
- 3 Critische Dichtkunst, J.J. Breitinger, Zürich, 1740;
Critische Abhandlung von dem Wunderbaren, J.J. Bodmer, Zürich, 1740;
Critische Betrachtungen über die Poetischen Gemähle der Dichter, J.J. Bodmer, Zürich u. Leipzig, 1741.

Discourse der Mahlern¹ we find, along all the remarks about exact imitation and copying, considerable importance attributed to the imagination and to the passion of the artist for his subject. And, more important still, we find, even if in undeveloped form, an attempt to describe the creative process which points away from slavish imitation to more fruitful theories. It is the poet's business to communicate not merely the object, that which he has seen, heard, experienced, but his own impression of it too; and in such a way that it arouses the same impression in the reader: "Wenn er mit solchen angemessenen Worten davon redet, welche nur eben dieselben Ideen davon erwecken, die er hat..... so sage ich, dass er natürlich schreibe."² Six years later in his work on the Einbildungskraft³ Bodmer developed this idea, insisting far more forcefully that photographically accurate reproduction is not enough; that a description must call forth all the concomitants of thought and feeling which the original had aroused in the writer. Again, as in Feind, the test of "naturalness" lies not in any relation of work of art to original in nature, but in the response which the work calls forth in the recipient. And Bodmer now recognises that the way to achieve the right response is by selection, by picking out what is important and ignoring the rest, thus concentrating the attention and heightening the impression. This is the germ of Breitingen's theory of the abstractio imaginationis.

Yet the impression which these fruitful ideas might have made was dissipated. Rather it was not concentrated. The ideas were not yet organised into a systematic theory with good propagandist value -- easily recognisable, easily assimilable. Ideas, however good, produced in desultory fashion, could avail little against such a well-organised campaign as Gottsched's, with its infallible and comprehensive guide-book which guaranteed to conduct the reader through all the vast, wide realm of literature with the help of but one simple little principle.

1 Die Discourse der Mahlern, Zürich, 1721, 1722 (Pts. I - III).
Die Mahler oder Discourse von den Sitten der Menschen, der vierdte und letzte Theil, Zürich, 1723.

2 Op. cit., I. St. XIX. Cf. IV, St. XVII.

3 Von dem Einfluss und Gebrauche der Einbildungskraft.
J.J. Bodmer, Franckfurt und Leipzig, 1727.

Thus it came about that, although the eighteenth century before the appearance of the Critische Dichtkunst was by no means devoid of utterances about poetry, taste, imagination, realism, dramatic convention, all these varied voices, discussing on independent lines, were drowned for a time by one voice, raised above the rest and imposing the uniformity of a rigid system; so that, by the time Elias Schlegel arrived in Leipzig, the views which counted were those propounded by Gottsched. It is against these that we have to measure Schlegel.

Apart from its comprehensive nature which supplied a need of the time, the success of Gottsched's Critische Dichtkunst derived solely from the position of authority which its author managed to secure for himself. The sequence of events in his rise to power are too well-known to require more than brief reference here. As Bélouin has pointed out, the place itself was not without influence.¹ A happy combination of circumstances provided that Gottsched, a man not only of ambition but of sound commonsense, untiring energy and dogged perseverance, should come to Leipzig, of all the towns in Germany the one most favourable for his subsequent activity; a town whose culture was in the hands, not of a court, but of an academic aristocracy recruited from professional and bourgeois circles; and that there, being fired with the desire to reform the German theatre, he should have the good fortune to find a troupe of players whose director was finally persuaded to assist him in his efforts. But in Gottsched's rapid advance to a position of unprecedented authority we nevertheless have to give him credit for the masterly fashion in which he neglected no opportunity of following up one strategic victory with another; for the way in which he consolidated his position at every stage and extended his activities in all directions so that they embraced the three sides of his undertaking: practical management, dramatic production and critical theory. He made use of every advantage offered by his official position as Senior of the Deutsche Gesellschaft and as professor in the university. His wife, pupils, friends were all in turn pressed into service to further the realisation of his purpose.

When he came to Leipzig Gottsched lost no time in ensuring for himself a place in academic circles. Since its foundation in 1697, the Deutschübende Gesellschaft had been intimately connected

1 Bélouin, op. cit., p. 68.

with the university. Gottsched arrived in the town on February 18, 1724. By the 1st March he was a member of this society. Two years later he became its Senior. Soon after his arrival, too, he entered the house of Burkhard Mencke as tutor. He thus had easy access to Mencke's famous library - a fact of no small importance when one considers the amount of reading he did before writing his Critische Dichtkunst. By 1731 he was Professor of Poetry in the university; three years later he was made Professor of Logic and Metaphysics too. He had now arrived in a position from which he could exert influence and spread doctrines.

As early as 1725, scarcely a year after his arrival in Leipzig, Gottsched had taken the first step towards the general cultural improvement of the people, by the publication of his periodical Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen, followed in 1727 by Der Biedermann.¹ In these early years, too, are to be found the beginnings of his interest in the theatre. The troupe whose performances he first witnessed was that of Hoffmann, and the acting of Frau Neuber inspired him to write a long passage on the theatre in Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen. It was in this way that he had the opportunity of seeing a regular tragedy, Corneille's Cid in translation, and from this moment he determined that here was the type of play which ought to be performed regularly. Then what an instrument the theatre might be in bringing about the cultural improvement he had in mind! But unfortunately the rest of Hoffmann's repertoire was made up of vastly different material - "lauter schwülstige und mit Harlekins Lustbarkeiten untermengte Haupt - und Staats - Actionen, lauter unnatürliche Romanstreichs und Liebesverwirrungen, lauter pöbelhafte Fratzen und Zoten."² Thus indiscriminately did Gottsched condemn the German plays, though some among them as, for instance, Kohlhard's Charles XII, might well have merited a more favourable verdict.

This deplorable state of affairs Gottsched now set out to repair and he saw clearly what had to be done. He had to effect a change in the drama itself, in the actors who presented it and in the public who witnessed it. His early periodicals represent

1 These periodicals are partially reprinted in Gottsched's Gesammelte Schriften, ed. E. Reichel, vols. 1 - 4, Berlin, 1902 - 12.

2 From the preface to Cato. Joh. Christ. Gottscheds Sterbender Cato, ein Trauerspiel, nebst einer Critischen Vorrede, Leipzig, 1732.

his first effort in the direction of the public. He next tried to win over the actors, to interest them in his plan for producing only regular plays. This was not easy but his insistence finally met with success, and he achieved a performance of the Cid in a new translation by the mayor of Leipzig, of Cinna translated by a Nürnberg councillor and of Racine's Iphigénie translated by himself.¹ His project thus appeared to have received the blessing of civic authority and with it that mantle of respectability which would ensure its success among the middle-classes.

This was in 1729. With clear insight into the need for consolidating his position, Gottsched in the next year followed up his victory with the publication of his theoretical manifesto, the Critische Dichtkunst. This had the effect of extending his influence beyond the narrow limits of Leipzig, Nürnberg and Braunschweig where the regular plays were performed, and at the same time of giving him additional authority in the eyes of the actors.

Without these actors the whole of Gottsched's enterprise must have foundered. The almost missionary zeal revealed in the letters of Johann Neuber is the most striking testimony to Gottsched's influence in those years round about 1730. He writes of the industry and perseverance of the actors, not only in the practical tasks of their trade but in the translation of regular plays for the repertoire. His anxiety to win over the public and not to frighten them off by too precipitate action is shewn by a diplomatic regard for the advisability of introducing the new style. Thus from Nürnberg he writes: "da wir hier die Woche nur 2 mahl agiren, so habe erst die Zeit erwarten müssen, biss ich erfahren, ob es möglich sey den hiesigen einen Geschmack davon bey zu bringen."² The difficulties of introducing the new repertory must often have been well-nigh insuperable and at one point a wistful speculation as to the possibly higher profits which the old type of play would have yielded intrudes almost against his will: "Vielleicht - doch nicht gewiss - würden wir

1 Cf. Eugen Reichel, op. cit., I, p. 513.

2 Letter of July 21, 1731, cited by Reden-Esbeck, op. cit., p. 101.

etl. Thaler mehr erobert haben, wenn wir lauter abgeschmackte hiesige bürgl. Mode Stücke aufführten." But resolutely he brushes the thought aside: "da wir aber einmahl was gutes angefangen, so will ich nicht davon lassen, so lang ich noch 1 gr. daran zu wenden habe. Denn gut muss doch gut bleiben."¹ The same confident courage is expressed in phrases such as: "endlich wird doch was draus werden müssen" and "mit der Zeit wird sichs geben" which occur throughout the letters. Even from Hamburg, where the Neubers never had great success and frequently had to revert to the old style, he writes: "Die Mühe so zu Verbesserung des Geschmacks angewendet wird scheint nicht gar vergebens zu seyn."² When it finally becomes impossible to continue he writes with a regret which is simple and sincere: "Es kränket mich im Herzen, wenn ich bedencke, was Ew. Hochedelgeb. sich unserntwegen vor Mühe gegeben, und wenn ich dabey überlege, dass Sie nicht bald die Freude haben sollen, den Vorsatz ausgeführt zu sehen. Dieses ist mein Ernst und keine Schmeicheley."³

Gottsched not only persuaded the Neubers to act the kind of plays which he admired, but induced them to adopt the measures which he advocated for improving the social status of the actor. The mantle of respectability must descend on them too. This was very necessary if the theatre was to be a cultural force as Gottsched hoped. Actors were still a despised people, condemned as loose-living and immoral. As late as 1692 Velther had been denied the sacrament on his death-bed⁴. Often the accusations of immorality were true; but whether they were or not, Gottsched had to guard against them being made, otherwise his project was likely to fail. Thanks to Frau Neuber's co-operation, he was able to note a distinct improvement in the morality and behaviour of the actors. This, in fact, became traditional, and in the regulations drawn up by all later theatrical companies much attention is devoted to standards of conduct and propriety.

Meanwhile Gottsched continued to follow up his success. After the publication of the Critische Dichtkunst, he again turned his attention to the drama and produced in 1732 the

1 Letter of July 21, 1731, cited by Reden-Esbeck, (op.cit., p. 101).

2 Letter of July 12, 1732, ibid., p. 114.

3 Letter of May 2, 1736, op. cit., p. 197.

4 cf. Willi Fleming, Die Oper, ed. cit., p. 13.

first "original" German tragedy, Der Sterbende Cato, in reality a more or less free translation of Deschamps's Caton d'Utique, the end however influenced by Addison's play on the same theme. In the same year, with the improvement of the general public in view, he founded a periodical to be composed exclusively of articles on language and literature.¹ He was thus provided with an excellent channel for circulating his ideas and airing his criticism. The next immediate necessity was the creation of an adequate repertoire, and Gottsched would doubtless have liked to start straight away on a Deutsche Schaubühne, an anthology of suitable plays. But here matters were rather out of his control, reluctant as he was to admit it. This project had perforce to wait until the plays were forthcoming. The lack of plays was one of Neuber's great difficulties. Gottsched used to let him have them without delay, even sending on isolated scenes and acts as they were ready. He never ceased to urge his pupils to translation and independent production. Their achievements were embodied some years later in the six volumes of the Schaubühne.² Although this appeared when the period of Gottsched's supreme influence was past and the decline had already set in, the plays contained in it nevertheless represent the practical results of his reforms, practice inevitably following precept at some little distance of time.

No single one of Gottsched's achievements is sufficient in itself to account for his phenomenal success. One might be tempted to find the key to it in the many-sidedness of his activity, although this in itself does not provide a completely satisfactory explanation either. But this activity extended in three directions; it was concerned with poetic theory, with the creation of drama and with the theatre. And here, in the last-named, we have the crux of the whole matter. Into that union of poetic theory and practice, which to some extent had already been achieved by others,

1 This was the Beyträge zur Critischen Historie der Deutschen Sprache, ed. cit.

2 Deutsche Schaubühne nach den Regeln der alten Griechen und Römer eingerichtet, Leipzig, 1741-5.

he introduced a third element, indispensable for the development of literary drama - the element of theatrical production. This is what distinguishes him from his contemporaries and predecessors, and ensures him success, even though his own writings and his whole approach to literature may be, in themselves, far less valuable than theirs. It is the testimony of Johann Neuber, the actor, not that of any academic associate, which furnishes us with the key to Gottsched's authority. It is his association with the theatre and with the acting profession, and not anything he wrote, which gives him a place in literary history. From now on, it is possible that a proportion at least of the acted drama will be literary drama. A knot has been tied between the two - and it remains tied despite setbacks and interruptions. It has been said that Gottsched closes an epoch and that progress was only possible through reaction against him. And the statement has its truth. But in one sense at least he is a beginner, and progress was only possible because of what he had done.

Gottsched's theory

In the preceding section we tried to give a picture of the peculiar authority wielded by Gottsched and to shew how it happened that, at the time of Elias Schlegel's arrival in Leipzig, his was the only theory of poetry which carried weight. We now turn to an examination of that theory itself, for only thus can we measure the degree of Schlegel's advance beyond it and the value of his reaction against it. The material used in the following account has been taken mainly from the Critische Dichtkunst but also from articles in the Beyträge. Views taken from anonymous articles in the latter which clearly tally with generally accepted Gottschedian arguments are assumed to have been sponsored or approved by him.

Gottsched himself admitted humbly enough that his Critische Dichtkunst was not original; it was a compilation of the ideas of the various critics he had read. This was not in itself a fault. But unfortunately he did not reflect on the ideas and attempt to fuse them together. The result is a work which is valid in parts where he happens to have hit on a good source, but which has little value viewed as a whole. It lacks homogeneity and is full of discrepancies and inner contradictions. Whatever of truth and importance he may say on one page is nullified a few pages later by the expression of a diametrically opposite view. This leaves us with the feeling that neither view has been assimilated or completely understood, and deprives the work of any co-ordinating thread of opinion. One might imagine that Gottsched possesses no personal conviction which moves him to adopt one theory and to reject another. In a way this is true. He has no aesthetic convictions. But he has very strong practical convictions and this is, in part, the root of the trouble. Practical considerations overshadow the rest. Certain theories with the weight of long tradition behind them may not be omitted; for German culture may be a late-comer into the European family, but the fact of a common lineage must be established beyond any shadow of doubt. On the other hand, practical rules of a kind suitable for the guidance and help of young poets must be included too, even when they conflict with the main theories. For the goal is, after all, not to produce a philosophy of poetry, but to enable German writers to produce works which will rival those of the French.

Gottsched required a convenient principle on which he could base all forms of literature. He believed he had found it in the theory of the imitation of nature. In the frontispiece of his Dichtkunst he guarantees to shew throughout, "dass das innere Wesen der Poesie in einer Nachahmung der Natur bestehe." This he insists on, rejecting firmly the idea that verse is the criterion of whether a work is poetry or not. Versification is, at most, an ornament; the value of a poem depends on its content. Scornfully he refers to Reimschmiede and to those who attach undue importance to external form: "Kinder und Unwissende bleiben am äusserlichen kleben, und sehen auch eine scandirte und gereimte Prosa für ein Gedicht."¹ The works of a scientist or historian, just because they happen to be written in verse cannot be called poetry; for the distinguishing mark of a poet is that he imitates. In replying to possible objections to this, Gottsched points out: "Nicht alles, was ein Geschichtschreiber thut, das thut er als ein Geschichtschreiber....die Bilder und erdichteten Reden, so in Geschichtsbüchern vorkommen, sind poetische Kunststücke, die ein Geschichtschreiber nur entlehnt, um eine trockne Erzählung dadurch ein wenig anmuthiger zu machen...."²

External form, then, is not of primary importance. In thus stressing the content of literature, Gottsched made a distinct advance on his predecessors, and at the same time challenged contemporary rhymsters and the prevailing fashion of acclaiming as a poet anyone who could produce a few lines which scanned and rhymed.

Unfortunately, he is not able to maintain this standpoint consistently throughout. Towards the end of the Critische Dichtkunst he does, after all, concede the name of poetry to scientific and philosophical subjects treated in verse, even though they do not "imitate" nature. And he justifies his compromise with the surprising claim that odes, elegies etc. are reckoned as poetry solely on account of the fact that they are in verse, "obgleich selten eine Fabel darinn vorkommt." On these grounds scientific and philosophical treatises in verse cannot be denied the name of poetry either.³ The criterion of what is poetry would now seem to be less clearly and firmly fixed in his mind.

1 C.D., p. 90. The references, except where otherwise stated, are to the 2nd. edition, 1737.

2 Ibid., pp. 95, 96.

3 Ibid., p. 609.

Despite such lapses, however, Gottsched's official position was that the essence of poetry lies in the imitation of nature. What does he mean by nature? What is to be imitated? His interest is mainly in human nature. Man, his character, his emotions, his faults, these are the chief concern of the poet. Theoretically he is concerned with "alle Menschen in allen Ständen". In practice, however, Gottsched confines himself to talking about three spheres; court life, life among the bourgeoisie in the towns, and a utopian - not an actual - country life.¹ Exactly how much of any of these three aspects of life may be represented is determined by considerations of decency and morality. Pastorals may not depict shepherds as they are to-day. Their life is too unpleasant; they have too many faults and vices. Dialogue, writing in general, must be "natural"; but natural with the qualification that it must avoid all coarseness and impropriety. The business of the poet, as of the painter, is to imitate "schöne Natur". The word nature, in fact, in Gottsched's mouth, is always implicitly qualified by sound common-sense with a distinctly moral bias.

Thus he limits very much the kind of nature that is to be imitated. When we come to ask how it is to be imitated we at once strike another confusion, for Gottsched is not at all clear as to what is the medium of literature. At one point he states correctly that words are the poet's medium: "Der Maler ahmet sie (nature) durch Pinsel und Farben nach;...der Poet aber thut es durch eine tactmässig abgemessene, oder sonst wohl eingerichtete Rede."² Elsewhere, however, losing sight of the fact that words are the poet's medium, in which he works as the painter works in paint or the sculptor in stone, he falls into confusion and asserts that the poet achieves his imitation by means of either a "lively description" or a "living presentation of the original"!....."Diese Nachahmung der Poeten nun geschieht vermittelst einer sehr lebhaften Beschreibung, oder gar lebendigen Vorstellung desjenigen, was sie nachahmen...."³

But whatever his uncertainty as to the medium, Gottsched is

1 C.D., pp. 136-140. Cf. C.B. X, vol. 3, p. 309: "Wir haben dreyerley Lebensarten in der Welt. Die eine ist das Hofleben; dieses stellt das Trauerspiel vor. Die andre ist das Stadtleben; das wird in der Komödie nachgeahmt. Die dritte ist das unschuldige Landleben; und solches wird in Schäferspielen abgemalt."

2 C.D., p. 95.

3 Ibid., p. 90.

in no difficulty at all about the effect that an imitation should have. In principle at least, a work should be close enough to the original to evoke a complete illusion of reality: "Die Schreibart richtet er (the poet) allezeit nach den Sachen, damit er die Natur besser nachahme.....Er ist nicht zufrieden, dass die Worte mit den Begriffen übereinstimmen, sondern er strebt nach was vollkommenerm und macht die Schreibart der Sache so ähnlich, dass man die Sache selbst zu sehen glaubt."¹ When he is witnessing drama, for instance, the spectator wants to forget altogether that he is in the theatre. Certain things, such as rhyme, prevent him from doing this. They remind him that it is only a play and thereby destroy the illusion. Gottsched's maxim is therefore: imitate the original as closely as possible and, as far as drama is concerned, avoid using anything which will remind the spectator that it is not actuality which he sees before him.

This is the principle, and it suggests the kind of crude naturalism which we shall find Gottsched and his pupils advocating at every turn, in arguments about verse, monologues, asides, opera, and about the production of drama. But many things prevent him in practice from consistently demanding such a faithful copy of reality. His basic principle of imitation of nature frequently has to yield to other theories which are just as dear to him and with which he is unable to reconcile it.

There is first of all the question of style. Gottsched insists on a natural style. In so doing he is making a stand against the flowery effusions of the second Silesian school, the rampagings of the Haupt- und Staatsaktionen and the fantastic improbabilities of operatic librettos. At the same time this injunction to avoid the turgid and the extravagant, and to adhere more closely to the kind of speech used by real people in everyday life, fitted in very nicely with his principle of imitating nature. But now, on the other hand, we also find him distinguishing carefully between poetic style and ordinary everyday prose; and clearly there is here an element opposed to the strict imitation of nature. The explanation is to be sought in the models he had always in view and which he intended to impose upon the German stage until their like could be produced by native poets. The language of French classical tragedy was, however, very far removed from that of ordinary conversations, and in the matter of style therefore, Gottsched abandons his main principle. Ordinary thoughts, words and phrases do not make poetry:

1 C.B., X, Vol. 3, p. 327. Cf. too C.D., p. 360.

"Niemand sage mir, dass man dieses alles auch in Prosa thun könne. Freylich kann es geschehen aber es wird auch alsdann eine ungebundene poetische Schreibart seyn. Kein guter prosaischer Scribent hat jemals soviel Zierrathe zusammengehäufet, und wenn er es getan so haben alle Critici gesagt, er schreibe poetisch."¹ Citing Horace, he demands a middle way between "ganz natürlich reden" and "hoch über allen Wolken nach leerer Luft schnappen."² Even what he terms "natural" style is to differ in some way from prose, while the sinnreiche and the pathetische Schreibart are still further to accentuate this difference. It is difficult to gather what, in his view, really forms the distinguishing mark of poetic style, but it would appear to be Zierrathe of various kinds. This is to say, he seeks the essence of it in ornamental excrescences rather than in any fundamental quality of approach. His chief concern is to enable his pupils to steer a safe middle course and he offers sound commonsense as the star by which to navigate their craft through the rocks and reefs of too free a fancy.

Equally difficult to reconcile with the principle of strict imitation is Gottsched's Fabel theory. For it would seem, after all, that imitation, even when executed in the "poetic" style, is still not sufficient to make a great poet. The imitation of emotion, be it directly, as in lyric poetry, or indirectly, as in the portrayal of characters in drama, may suffice to make a lesser poet. But the real essence of great poetry, we now learn, is the Fabel, and the poet is to be judged by his ability to create this; this is, by his power of invention. Gottsched will not even allow such a Fabel to have a substratum of fact, an authentic origin in actual life or in history: "Sachen, die wirklich geschehen sind, d.i. wahre Begebenheiten, darf man nicht erst dichten: Folglich entsteht auch aus Beschreibung und Erzählung derselben kein Gedichte, sondern eine Historie....; und ihr Verfasser bekommt nicht den Namen eines Dichters, sondern eines Geschichtschreibers."³ He defines the Fabel as an event which might happen in certain circumstances and which contains within it a useful moral truth. Philosophically speaking, he thinks, one might call it something from another world and in his demands that it must be something new there is certainly no ambiguity: "Es muss was Eigenes, es muss eine neue poetische Fabel sein, deren Erfindung und geschickte Ausführung mir den

1 C.D., p. 327.

2 Ibid., p. 243.

3 Ibid., pp. 141, 142.

Namen eines Dichters erwerben soll;"¹ and again in the Beyträge: "Eine blosse Schönheit, wenn sie gemein ist, und täglich vorkommt, bewundert man nicht. Es muss was neues, was seltsames und was fürtreffliches seyn."²

The discrepancy between such demands and the principle of imitation is striking and it did not escape the attention of his contemporaries. Gottsched had to defend himself against attack. Professor Bock, in a treatise on poetry, maintained that in thus making invention the essence and mark of poetry, Gottsched was contradicting his earlier definition of it as an imitation of nature.³ Gottsched's defence lacks coherence but not variety. He sets up a hierarchy of genres, in which imitation of natural things is on the lowest rung of the ladder, while the Fabel, as he had already said in the Dichtkunst, represents the highest kind of imitation. This is one line of defence. But he feels it to be insufficient and embarks on another, presumably with the idea of strengthening his position, but quite oblivious that he is in effect contradicting all that he has said about the Fabel and endangering the order of the very hierarchy he had ordained. For he now maintains that it is impossible to imitate at all without inventing in some degree: "Wir getrauen uns zu behaupten, dass man keine Begebenheit recht lebhaft nachahmen könne, wenn man nicht ein oder den anderen Umstand erdichtet, der wahrscheinlicherwise dabey geschehen ist."⁴ In fact, as now emerges, a Fabel comes into being as soon as the slightest circumstances of an actual occurrence is altered, even if this implies nothing more than the introduction of dialogue! Bock intimated that Gottsched was defending and borrowing from the ancients rather than thinking the matter out for himself⁵ and we are forced to the same conclusion. The Fabel theory is a clumsy attempt to come to grips with Aristotle, whom he could not ignore, but whom he entirely failed to understand.

1 Ibid., p. 160.

2 C.B., X, vol. 3, p. 335.

3 Herrn Prof. Bocks Abhandlung von der Schönheit in den Gedichten, C.B., X, IV, vol. 3. This review of Prof. Bock's treatise contains also Gottsched's defence against the attack made on him.

4 Ibid., p. 340.

5 Ibid., p. 339.

Imitation, Erfindung, Fabel, these three would appear to be almost synonymous; either singly or in combination, they constitute the essence of poetry and are opposed to mere versification. We now see clearly that the art of imitation is by no means merely the faithful reproduction of reality. According to Gottsched's definition of the Fabel, it would seem indeed to be rather the portrayal of the possible, and in the third edition of the Dichtkunst he does apparently accept the existence of other possible worlds: "Dem Dichter stehen alle möglichen Welten zu Dienste. Er schränkt seinen Witz nicht in den Lauf der wirklich vorhandenen Natur ein."¹ Even in the second edition he indicates that the acceptance of an improbable kind of world is not in itself a difficulty, provided that within it everything proceeds according to a certain logic: "Einem Poeten ist es erlaubt, eine Fabel durch die andre wahrscheinlich zu machen: und er darf also nur überhaupt dichten: Es sei einmal eine Zeit gewesen, da alle Pflanzen und Thiere hätten reden können. Setzt man diess zum voraus; so lässt sich hiernach alles übrige hören."² In an article in the Beyträge in 1740, Gottsched goes even further than this, and asserts that things which seem impossible to man may be possible to a "higher power"! We know that it is impossible for man to ride through the air on a broomstick; and yet it has long been believed that witches do this with the aid of the devil! Indeed much that a poet writes is not intended to be generally credited....."Wer wollte behaupten, dass Fenelon alles, was er in dem Telemach geschrieben, von seinen Lesern geglaubt haben wolle? Wir wissen es gewiss, dass Venus.....u.s.w. unmögliche Dinge sind. Gleichwohl haben sie unter gewissen Bedingungen ihre Wahrscheinlichkeit. Selbst in der Schrift ist die Fabel von den Bäumen, die sich einen König wählten, an sich unmöglich; und dennoch hat sie unter der Bedingung, dass die Bäume denken, reden und gehen können, ihre Wahrscheinlichkeit."³ This interpretation of probability seems to admit a good deal, and one might be tempted to think that Gottsched was prepared to accept even the miraculous. And yet in this same article he shews his complete

1 C.D., 3rd. edition, 1742, p. 153.

2 C.D., p. 146.

3 Des berühmten Johann le Clerc Gedanken über die Poeten und Poesie an sich selbst. Mit Anmerkungen erläutert, C.B., XXIV, vol. 6, p. 592. Gottsched had translated Le Clerc's treatise and used it as a preface for his edition of the poems of Pietsch in 1725. He now reprinted it in the Beyträge adding a commentary of his own.

lack of sympathy and understanding for anything imaginative or fanciful, derides fairy tales and the Thousand and One Nights, pours scorn on Milton and on the attempts of the Swiss to make him known to German readers. In fact his statement in the Dichtkunst that things in themselves impossible can, by combination with other events and circumstances, be made probable and convincing,¹ while apparently allowing of very free interpretation, must be taken as being liberal only in theory.

In any account of Gottsched one may not disregard the attempts which he thus makes to come to terms with the miraculous and with a freer conception of probability; but one is forced to note that they are but dutiful efforts to deal with a question which was becoming so much talked about that he could scarcely pass over it in silence. And the very manner in which he approaches these nebulous creations of the poet's fancy, plodding with workaday feet over the most delicate fabric and by worthy, laboured argument bringing down to solid earth the denizens of the clouds, shews how completely bereft he was of all feeling for poetry, however much he may have admired the uplifting effect of certain aspects of literature. Whatever may have been his theory of "possible worlds" and of the miraculous, always when it comes to practical application there is constant caution: "Das Wunderbare muss noch allezeit in den Schranken der Natur bleiben und nicht zu hoch steigen."² Within the bounds of nature! That means for him that it must be visible, audible, tangible and accessible to good honest reasoning. The more liberal conception of probability, which certain passages seem to indicate, is not an organic part of his theory. It is an excrescence. His real view of probability is synonymous with sound commonsense of the most mundane kind, and its function is to check off whether a thing is natural. It is probability of the most external kind imaginable, and the application of it often verges on the ridiculous. Invocations to the muses are not accepted as conventions and their significance looked at from within in the light of the poem in which they are found. They are subjected to a test from without; the whole battery of every-day commonsense is brought to bear. In the light of this they are found wanting and rejected. For why, asks Gottsched, is it necessary to invoke the divine aid of muses? Surely a man of normal intelligence is capable at a pinch of producing a sonnet, ode or even an elegy without such aid.³ The

1 C.D., p. 190.

2 Ibid., p. 179.

3 Ibid., p. 164.

application of this kind of probability cuts at the root of every art convention. In his criticism of Virgil he seizes on the scene in which Aeneas tells Dido the long story of his wanderings. How much more probable, he naively suggests, that instead of thus patiently listening to him without uttering a single word, she would have fallen asleep over it "oder doch fleissig gejäht."1

Gottsched defines probability as "die Aehnlichkeit des Erdichteten mit dem, was wirklich zu geschehen pflegt; oder die Uebereinstimmung der Fabel mit der Natur."2 Thus the Fabel is brought into close connection with the imitation theory. Probability is the link between the two. It acts as a kind of brake on the poet's invention, ensuring that what is fiction shall yet never fail to give the impression of being a good imitation of fact. By means of probability the poet is provided with a safe rule of guidance and the making of poetry is thus treated as a thing that can be learned. As we shall see later, Gottsched makes probability the deciding factor in all matters to do with drama. It is for him the highest authority and to its ruling he submits the unities of time and place as well as verse, monologues, and asides. If the theory of possible worlds is an organic excrescence, this banal conception of probability is an integral part of Gottsched's theory. In his attack on opera, it provides him with a slogan and battle-cry: "Wo singet man in der Welt in allem Thun und Lassen?"3 "Wo ist doch das Vorbild dieser Nachahmungen? Wo ist die Natur mit der diese Fabeln eine Aehnlichkeit haben?"4 He deplores the "Mangel der Wahrscheinlichkeit in der Folge und Verknüpfung der Opernfabel".5 The entire absence of similarity with any conceivable Vorbild in nature comes from ignoring the canon of probability.

The art of making poetry can be learned. Since he holds firmly to this belief, it is not surprising to find that Gottsched has very definite ideas about the nature of a poet, about the necessary qualifications of temperament and training. And again it is a conception dominated and imbued by sound commonsense. He

1 Ibid., p. 194.

2 Ibid., p. 187.

3 C.B., X, vol. 3, p. 309.

4 C.D., p. 716.

5 C.B., X, vol. 3, p. 290.

attempts to bring creative power into line with his imitation theory by referring to the imitative skill of children. He is thoroughly suspicious of any suggestions of divine inspiration. He believes that all things in heaven and earth can be accounted for and plucks the mystery out of genius thus: "Den heimlichen Einfluss des Himmels fühlen, und durch ein Gestirn in der Geburt zu Poeten gemacht worden seyn, das heisst ausser der gebundenen Schreibart nichts anders, als ein gutes und zum Nachahmen geschicktes Naturell bekommen haben."¹ This Naturell is not very clearly described. In earlier works, Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen for example, there is some talk of imagination; in the Dichtkunst he prefers to speak of "ein lebhafter Witz". This appears to be the power to perceive existing similarities.² Thus we again have a close link with imitation, the essence of which lies in similarity. In order to develop in a poet this natural gift of observing what others miss and of perceiving relationships between things, Gottsched suggests that he be set to copy drawings and paintings. In this way he will later become as good at imitating nature with the pen as with brush and colours. Thus poets are to be made by teaching them to paint. Again he shews a complete lack of understanding of medium and of the artist's craft.

Such a Naturell, however, is not enough to make a poet; it is only the raw material. Practice is necessary, and, more even than that, a knowledge of the "rules". Reviewing Hudemann's poems in the Beyträge he says: "Er hat darinn gewiesen, dass er nicht nur ein Poet aus blosser Naturelle oder aus fleissiger Übung, sondern auch aus gründlicher Einsicht in die Regeln der wahren Dichtkunst werden wollen. Dieses Exempel ist also allen den seichten Versmachern anzupreisen, die sich einbilden, dass die Dichtkunst mit ihnen gebohren werden."³ The eagerness with which Gottsched insists that a poet is not born but made is almost pathetic, for the decision is forced upon him by reason of what he wants to achieve. He has to pin his hopes to "rules" rather than genius, for how else can he envisage the realisation of his aim - the re-birth of literature? Divine inspiration is far too tricky and risky a business. He has to have certainty.

Above all, the poet must possess healthy commonsense, necessary to check over-abundant phantasy, for "eine gar zu

1 C.D., p. 98.

2 Ibid., p. 99.

3 C.B., X, vol. 3, p. 270.

hitzige Einbildungskraft macht unsinnige Dichter, dafern das Feuer der Phantasie nicht durch eine gesunde Vernunft gemässigt wird.... Es ist nirgends leichter ausgeschweift als in der Poesie. Wer seinen regellosen Trieben den Zügel schiessen lässt, dem geht es wie dem jungen Phaeton."¹

The poet has to learn, has to develop his natural gifts, but not in the school of experience. This, one might think, would be the best way for him to widen and deepen his perception and insight. But in Gottsched's view an empirical knowledge of human nature is not by any means enough. The poet is not only a Nachahmer der Natur, he is a gelehrter Nachahmer.² For the poet who is going to delineate character, Gottsched demands a knowledge of ethics and philosophy. He should be well-versed too in all the sciences. Even a painter must know a great deal, and a poet has still more opportunity of making a fool of himself by revealing his ignorance on some point or other! To help him to distinguish good actions from bad Gottsched advocates the study of law and Staatskunst, while the dramatic poet should study psychology along the lines of the Wolffian philosophy. He should be familiar with all the types of character enumerated and described therein.³ It is significant that Gottsched thus recommends the study of man rather than of men, the abstract and general which can be learned rather than the concrete and individual which can only be intuited and perceived.

But a poet is not simply a poet and nothing more. He is also a man. And Gottsched does not stop at an analysis of his artist nature. His concern is also the poet as citizen and moral being. This is, historically, of great interest and importance. If the Dichtkunst was to be part of Gottsched's larger scheme for the cultural improvement of the German people, it had to take its stand on the side of respectability. Literature must be closely linked with morality or it could not hope to win general respect and approval. Gottsched therefore lays it down that the poet must be a "recht-schaffener Bürger und erlicher Mann".⁴ This suggestion that poet and good citizen are not mutually exclusive terms is a clever piece of propaganda and a bold challenge to the popular idea of the poet as a temperamental creature of doubtful morality.

1 C.D., p. 105. Cf. too, pp. 46, 47.

2 Ibid., p. 49.

3 Ibid., pp. 101 - 104.

4 Ibid., p. 151.

To a similar desire to stamp literature as respectable we may trace Gottsched's views on the purpose of imitation. In Der Biedermann he suggested that to arouse pleasure was the sole purpose of painting: "Ich sehe doch etwas, so mein Auge vergnügt, und dieses Vergnügen ist die einzige Absicht aller Gemälde."¹ But never does he admit that sensuous pleasure is the end or aim of literature. Indeed he expressly rejects the idea. If pleasure, he says, were the sole aim of theatrical productions, then he would be bound to recognise opera as "das Meisterstück der Schaubühne."² But we know that he in fact roundly condemned this form of drama as "eine Beförderung der Wollust, und Verderberinn guter Sitten."³ At the beginning of the Dichtkunst, it is true, he does state that poetry should give pleasure and that it has failed in its purpose if it does not. But this is in his commentary to Horace's Ars Poetica and we must not forget that Gottsched was always influenced in his utterances by the particular source he happened to be dealing with at the moment. Elsewhere in his writings the moral purpose of literature completely predominates. In other arts he may admit pleasure as the end, since in them the sensuous power of the medium cannot so easily be argued away. But when he comes to literature, the more usual function of words as an instrument of the intellect is not only more in tune with his own temperament, but is also of so much more obvious use to him in his general purposes of cultural reform, that he completely disregards the fact that words are also, if more rarely, an artistic medium capable of being used with considerable sensuous effect. It never occurs to Gottsched that moral improvement might be effected indirectly through contact with the beautiful; or, if directly, then at least intangibly, imperceptibly through reading works of generally high moral tone. No! he demands that it shall be done with direct didacticism. Literature has not to emanate a subtly pervading influence, it has to transmit an incisive and unmistakable message. In short, each separate poem, drama or novel is to embody and illustrate a definite

1 Der Biedermann, Reichel's reprint, ed. cit., Stück XXI.

2 C.B., VIII, vol. 2, p. 651.

3 C.D., p. 717.

moral principle: "Endlich sollte man billig in einem jeden Schauspiel, entweder ein Laster, oder eine Tugend, vorstellig machen: aber dergestalt, dass man bey jenem allezeit das darauf folgende Verderben und Unglück, als eine Strafe desselben; bei dieser hingegen die darauf folgenden Glücksfälle und übrige Wohlfahrt als ihre Belohnung bemerken könnte. Geschieht dieses nicht, so wird ein Schauspiel entweder unnützlich oder schädlich."¹

It is on similar lines that Gottsched distinguishes between poetic and historical truth; the difference is purely of a moral nature. In history good is not always rewarded and evil punished; in poetry this must be so.² Here again we note conflict between the principle of imitation and some other theory. Gottsched believes that he is able to reconcile the two by saying that a poet imitates human actions, which are either good or evil, and that if he portrayed virtue as despicable, harmful or ridiculous, vice on the other hand as pleasant, advantageous or praiseworthy he would clearly be imitating nature in very distorted fashion and would completely fail to evoke any impression of similarity.³ But, in spite of his efforts, the discrepancy is not to be concealed and we again have to seek the explanation in his historical position. Literature must be on the side of virtue and justice; it must be "nützlich im gemeinen Wesen."⁴ Like a sugar-coated pill, it is to be curative yet not unpleasant: "Der Poet sieht sie (the public) als Kinder an, denen man den Arzneybecher mit Honig bestreichen muss."⁴ Since he intended the theatre to become a "Schule des Volkes" he thought it necessary for drama to shew that right always triumphs.

Gottsched, then, thought of the theatre as a "Schule des Volkes" and he spoke of attracting to it both "Gelehrte und Ungelehrte". It was undoubtedly his wish and aim to further an appreciation of literature outside and beyond court and academic circles. But the question is: just what sections of the rest of the community did he think capable of appreciation? This question is closely bound up

1 Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen, Reichel's reprint, ed. cit., p. 137. Cf. C.B., VI, vol. 2, p. 276, where there is a similar passage about the purpose of the novel.

2 C.B., XXIV, vol. 6, p. 588.

3 C.D., p. 106.

4 C.B., XXIV, vol. 6, p. 599.

with his conception of taste and how it can be cultivated. Since he will not admit at all the sensuous appeal of literature, it is not surprising to find that he puts no faith in natural taste, for this is always the expression of an inborn sensitiveness. The chapter on taste in the Dichtkunst is more or less a re-hash of König's treatise on the same subject.¹ Whatever isolated statements Gottsched may make there about the spontaneous nature of taste judgments or about taste being based solely on feeling - for here as elsewhere he follows his usual practice of adhering to the source in hand - the impression we derive from the whole is that good taste can only be acquired by means of Verstand. It is therefore inborn, inasmuch as Verstand itself is inborn, but it can only be developed through familiarity with, and understanding of, "rules". That is to say, it has to be inculcated through the intelligence. That this is his real opinion becomes particularly clear from a passage in which he says that for some reason the Pöbel has always claimed the right to be a judge of poetry, and this is all the more ridiculous since no one has ever assumed its ability to exercise judgment in other intellectual matters: "Kan er nun hierinnen keinen gültigen Ausspruch thun, und die Verfasser derselben, weder für gute Historienschreiber, noch für Redner, Philosophen, Arzneiverständige oder Rechtsgelehrte erklären; wie wird er von Gedichten zu urtheilen vermögend seyn, als deren Einrichtung und Ausarbeitung desto schwerer zu prüfen ist; je mehr sie unter so vielen äusserlichen Schönheiten und Zierrathen, dadurch auch critische Augen verblendet worden, verhüllet, ja tief verborgen liegt."² Thus in appreciating a poet one has to use those same faculties with which one estimates a philosopher, historian or lawyer. This means that poetry is to be judged by its intellectual content and it is therefore no wonder that Verstand is required in order to be able to do it. Uneducated people, who have not had the opportunity to become acquainted with rules, can only appreciate through sensuous feeling, and their judgment is therefore without validity. Thus it is doubtful whether Gottsched's schemes ever included the Pöbel, the mass of the people, whether the new drama, the reformed theatre were ever intended to appeal to them. A letter from Neuber to Gottsched in 1730 suggests that they were not; it implies that they will continue to demand for their amusement "grobe Possen",³ and to this desire Gottsched was

1 Cf. Braitmaier, op. cit., I, p. 95.

2 C.D., p. 91.

3 Letter of September 17, 1730, cited Reden-Esbeck, op. cit., p. 96.

not prepared to concede. He had no intention of pandering to anyone's taste: "Ein Poet habe sich nicht an den Geschmack seiner Zeiten zu kehren, sondern den Regeln der Alten.....zu folgen."¹ Through acquaintance with these rules the prevailing taste will change. Indeed, just as Gottsched thinks that it is impossible to be a poet without knowledge of the "rules", so, too, he denies the power of appreciating and judging literature to any but Kunstverständige.

When we come to Gottsched's theory of drama, we find repeated all the paradoxes and ambiguities which characterised his writing about literature in general. Imitation is the basic principle here as elsewhere, but still only ostensibly. The real watchwords are commonsense, rules, probability, and in face of these imitation often has to make a forced retreat. Nevertheless lip-service is paid to it in all definitions and we may say that, generally speaking, Gottsched is wont to stress it whenever the parallel with nature is obvious and the principle, in consequence, easy of application.²

As might be expected, the corner-stone of his dramatic theory is the Fabel built round a moral principle. He gives a kind of recipe for making it. First the moral principle is chosen and then an action which suitably illustrates it is sought. Having found this, it is possible to make it into any sort of a poem, dramatic or otherwise. What it becomes, we are told, depends solely on the kind of names given to the characters! The chief difference between a Fabel suitable for an epic and one suitable for drama, however, is that the latter must be probable even in its original premises: "Die dramatischen Fabeln leiden nichts, als was wahrscheinlich ist."³ Whereas the Fabel of an epic need only be probable in the logic of its subsequent treatment, whatever the improbabilities we are primarily asked to accept.

The Fabel must be complete. This Gottsched interprets as meaning that it must contain all the events required to illustrate fully the moral principle involved. This alone determines the point

1 C.D., p. 133.

2 Cf. F. Servaes, Die Poetik Gottscheds und der Schweizer, Strassburg, 1887, p. 37.

3 C.D., pp. 146 - 154.

of departure and the end. A play should contain only one Fabel, although subsidiary plots may be admitted. But these must in no way compete in importance with the main action.

Far more attention is paid on the whole to the action than to the characters in drama. This is understandable in view of the importance which Gottsched attached to the Fabel in general. In his commentary to the Ars Poetica at the beginning of the Dichtkunst he would seem to suggest that good characterisation can cover a multitude of sins; but elsewhere in his writing he always insists that the conduct of the action is the most difficult thing and seldom achieved: "Es hat viele Poeten gegeben, die in allem anderen Zuhör des Trauerspiels, in den Characteren, in dem Ausdrucke, in den Affecten glücklich gewesen: Aber in der Fabel ist es sehr wenigen gelungen."¹ This, then, is the real criterion of a good drama; and the one guiding principle in carrying out this difficult task, in developing the course of the action is, naturally, probability.

As to the persons of drama, they are not to be complex, but simple, straightforward characters. Gottsched, it will be remembered, advised the poet to go to philosophy in order to understand human nature; to study the various psychological types described there. These types he now expects to be transferred to the stage and to carry through the action chosen by the poet to illustrate his moral principle. They are to remain throughout "gleichförmig mit sich selbst".² A proud man must shew himself proud, a coward frightened, a miser miserly; and they must behave thus consistently right up to the end of the play. He thus allows neither development and growth of a character during the course of the action, nor that bewildering inconsistency so often manifested by human beings. In other words, the principle of imitation of nature has again receded somewhat into the background. Instead of the stage holding up the mirror to men as they are, it is to call to life puppet-figures, "types" of man studied in the abstract. Only occasionally does Gottsched seem to realise the possibility of "mixed" characters: "Zuweilen scheint es auch, als ob es eine gleichgültige oder mittlere Art derselben gäbe, die weder gut noch böse sind."³

1 Ibid., p. 675.

2 Ibid., p. 24. Cf. too, p. 681.

3 Ibid., p. 661.

For any departure from the traditionally accepted types the audience must be very carefully prepared, as if for something quite out of the ordinary; should it, for instance, happen that an old man is not miserly or a young man not a spendthrift, then very special care must be taken to make such unusual characters convincing and probable!¹ In this conception of character, which so clearly conflicts with any strict theory of imitation, Gottsched was influenced partly by other theories, which he did not completely understand, partly by his French models. The latter influence is clearly at work when he demands that only the chief persons shall be fully characterised; and again in the method he suggests for exaggerating character into types suitable for drama: "Ein kluger Poet sucht sich lauter ungemene Helden und Heldinnen, lauter unmenschliche Tyrannen und verdammliche Bösewichter aus..... Wenn ich.....einen Geizhals vorstelle, so muss ich freylich keinen mittelmässigen Geiz abbilden... sondern ich muss alles zusammensuchen, was ich an verschiedenen kargen Leuten bemerkt habe, und aus diesen Stücken einen vollkommenen Geizhals zusammensetzen."²

Dramatic form, as far as Gottsched is concerned, consists in three things: the duration of the action, the nature of the place, and the fact of the whole being in dialogue. Only in these respects does it differ from the epic. Apart from the fact of dialogue, then, form is, for him, synonymous with the unities of time and place. The authority of these is held to be absolute. Whether they accord or conflict with the principle of imitation is irrelevant. They are observed by his French models; there is nothing vague and nebulous about them; they can easily be grasped and applied by young poets. These are the factors which count with Gottsched. Indeed the unities form just the kind of practical guide that he is looking for. He justifies their use by an appeal to probability and thus, to his own satisfaction, brings them into relation with the imitation theory.

Unity of action, being not so simple and easy to define, is dealt with in summary fashion. The purpose of a play is to illustrate one "moralischer Lehrsatz"; therefore other action must be completely subordinated to the main action which serves this purpose, although subsidiary plots, so long as they do not encroach

1 Ibid., p. 705.

2 Ibid., p. 178.

on the main action, may each in turn illustrate still another moral principle. Unity of action thus finds its justification in the moral purpose of the drama. The other two unities find theirs in commonsense.

First let us take unity of place. The scene of the action must be the same throughout the play, and for this reason. The spectators must remain seated in one place: "folglich müssen auch die spielenden Personen alle auf einem Platze bleiben, den jene übersehen können, ohne ihren Ort zu ändern."¹ It is not the wonderful scenic effects which Gottsched objects to in opera; he is outraged by the frequent transformation of the scene during a single performance. Because of this the spectator feels as if he is on a journey; or, more accurately, as if he is in a magic land in which scenes and places travel past him.² And as we know, Gottsched has little use for either faery seas or magic lands.

The same kind of probability supplies the measure by which the validity of the unity of time is tested. Again it is the spectator, sitting there in the same place and only for a certain length of time, around whom the whole argument revolves: "denn was hat es für eine Wahrscheinlichkeit, wenn man in dem ersten Auftritte den Helden in der Wiege.....und zuletzt gar im Sarge vorstellen wollte.... Oder wie ist es wahrscheinlich, dass man es auf der Schaubühne etlichemal Abend werden sieht; und doch selbst, ohne zu essen oder zu trinken oder zu schlafen, immer auf einer Stelle sitzen bleibt."³ The best plays are those in which the action would not have taken more time to happen in reality than to be performed on the stage. At the most the action should not last longer than twelve hours. And these must be hours of the day, not of the night, "weil die Nacht zum Schlafen bestimmt ist." On this point Gottsched criticises Corneille because the action of Le Cid lasts a full twenty-four hours.³

1 Ibid., p. 678.

2 C.B., X, vol. 3, p. 311.

3 C.D., pp. 676, 677.

The spectator Gottsched has in mind seems to be a creature of purely physical attributes, devoid of imagination. Throughout the performance he must have in view the scene in which the action takes place; and since with his body he does not move from the theatre, there is, for Gottsched only one possible conclusion to be drawn; the scene on the stage must continue to be that which the spectator first saw in front of him as he entered the theatre. It is only with the actual physical presentation of drama that Gottsched is concerned. It does not matter how long the story of an epic lasts because that is only meant to be read; but the story of a play, which is to be physically acted by living people withⁱⁿ the space of a few hours, is a different matter.¹ Description of, or even reference to, the scene in the text of the play is unnecessary, for this is not the concern of the poet at all. He only needs to give some general indication of the scene in a stage-direction. The rest is a matter for the producer.² Indeed no great variety in the choice of scene for plays is desirable; "Ein Haus oder ein Platz auf öffentlicher Strasse muss der Schauplatz werden, wenn sie in der Stadt vorgeht: Sonst könnte es auch wohl ein königlicher Pallast, ein Garten, oder ein Wäldchen seyn."³

It is abundantly clear from all this that, in considering the problem of the unities of time and place, Gottsched is wholly absorbed by the relation of the spectator to the physical stage-setting. He would avoid, if possible, any discrepancy between the physical world around him and the imaginary world in the play. That other aspect of probability - the relation of the time and the place to the characters and events of the drama - does not concern him at all.

This preoccupation with the physical spectator, rather than with his imagination, is evident again when Gottsched deals with the question of division into acts. He takes over the traditional five acts without discussion, but not because of its tradition, nor with any attempt to justify it by reference to inner construction, but with the comment that it is a convenient number,

1 Ibid., p. 676.

2 Ibid., p. 687: "Dieses geht den Poeten nicht weiter an, als in so weit er sagt, wo der Schauplatz des Stückes gewesen, darnach sich der Theatermeister nachmals richten muss."

3 Ibid., p. 703.

"damit dem Zuschauer nicht die Zeit gar zu lang würde."¹ His remarks on where the division should come, on how to construct a play in five acts, reveal just how mechanical Gottsched conceived play-writing to be. The main action and all attendant circumstances are first determined: "Dieses theilt er dann in fünf Stücke ein, die ungefehr gleich gross sind, und ordnet sie so, dass natürlicher Weise das letztere aus dem vorhergehenden fliesset....."²

As regards other aspects of dramatic construction, Gottsched has very little to say on the subject. The exposition must reveal the character of the chief persons so that their subsequent actions are easily understood and convincing. From this point the intrigue should begin to develop, becoming more and more involved until the last act, if possible the last scene, where the dénouement ensues: "Dieser Knoten ist in der Fabel nöthig, die Aufmerksamkeit der Zuschauer zu erwecken, und sie auf den Ausgang solcher verwirrten Händel begierig zu machen."³ We see that the interest of the spectator is to be directed to the plot and its ramifications rather than to the characters and their reactions in a given situation. It is his curiosity that is to be aroused, and in consequence, intervention by a deus ex machina is rejected out of hand.⁴ For this deprives him of the pleasure of watching all the pieces finally drop into place.

The same mechanical interpretation of dramatic construction is at the back of Gottsched's demand that the various scenes must be well connected and follow convincingly one on the other. This is obviously of importance for a theatre in which it was the practice not to lower the curtain until the end of the performance, or at most between acts. But it would seem that Gottsched's chief concern is with the "rule" which had grown up in this connection - the rule of never leaving the stage empty. This assumes for him an existence in its own right. It is the physical presence of the people on the stage which is the thing that matters, not the psychological reasons for their being there. In practice, it was for him nothing more than one of the annoying technicalities which were involved in concocting a play and which had to be overcome by some device or other. This is clear from his defence

1 Ibid., p. 673.

2 Ibid., p. 674.

3 Ibid., p. 679.

4 Ibid., p. 31.

of his own Cato in which he admits that his devices are not as good as they might be.¹ He clearly considers it a vitally important "rule" and roundly criticises Corneille for offences against it: "Wie oft lässt er nicht die Schaubühne leer werden, noch ehe eine Handlung aus ist!"²

To the question of monologues Gottsched applies the same test as to opera, asking whether people behave like that in real life. Monologues could pass when there was a chorus present throughout the drama, because thoughts were then being communicated to someone and probability was thus ensured. But now, in the absence of a chorus, monologues are thoughts spoken aloud by a person alone on the stage and hence highly improbable, since sensible people do not talk aloud when they are alone: "Kluge Leute pflegen nicht laut zu reden, wenn sie allein sind; es wäre denn in besonderen Affecten, und das zwar mit wenig Worten."³ Asides require a slightly different argument. These do occur in real life and there would be no danger of offending against the law of probability were it not for the fact that, on the stage, such remarks must be uttered loudly enough for the audience to hear. And here arises the much-dreaded improbability. For some, at least, of the people on the stage are intended not to hear the remark; yet they are much nearer to the speaker than the audience. How can this be? "Was hier für eine Wahrscheinlichkeit stecke, das habe ich niemals ergründen können: Es wäre denn, dass die anwesende Person auf eine so kurze Zeit ihr Gehör verlohren hätte."⁴

Gottsched has little of interest to say about language and style in drama. His remarks are vague and general, the sole principle that guides him being, again, commonsense. He makes the general statement that the difference between characters should be apparent also from their words, but he does not embark upon a discussion of this knotty problem of differentiation of dialogue.⁵ He rejects sententiousness and, particularly in emotional passages,

1 C.B., V, vol. 2, p. 39.

2 Ibid., p. 48.

3 C.D., p. 704.

4 Ibid.

5 C.B., V, vol. 2, p. 56.

excessive ornamentation. Tragedy requires an "erhabene und prächtige Schreibart"; but, on the other hand, good poets will see to it that they keep this noble style well within the bounds of moderation by constant reference to reason and probability.¹

As regards the use of verse for drama, Gottsched's position is not quite clear. In the Dichtkunst he does not reject the use of verse, even in comedy. But both there and in the first number of the Beyträge he attacks the use of rhyme in drama and says that it is as improbable as singing in opera.² People simply do not rhyme in real life. On the other hand, we know that Gottsched supported Straube's articles on rhyme in drama; and in those articles Straube went beyond rhyme and attacked verse itself as improbable.³ Moreover the arguments he used are in complete accordance with Gottsched's crude view of probability, for both spring from the same conception of art.

In view of Gottsched's constant appeals to probability and his insistence on a close approximation to reality, we should expect tragi-comedy to appeal to him as being eminently realistic. But he expressly rejects the idea. The reason for this is partly the traditional strict separation of classes in drama: kings and princes moving in the realm of tragedy, the middle-class disporting itself in comedy. Gottsched admits that the great ones of this world may do foolish things, but it would be lacking in respect to depict them as ridiculous. Apart from this his mind was too fond of water-tight compartments: "Eine Tragi-comödie giebt einen so ungereimten Begriff, als wenn ich sagte, ein lustiges Klagelied."⁴ The only kinds of drama which he admits, then, are tragedy, comedy, pastoral and the much despised opera which has no original in reality.

On the essential problems of tragedy, the tragic hero, tragic guilt, conflict, catharsis, there is no need to dwell at length because Gottsched himself has little to say about them. The tragic hero is the character of greatest moral worth in the play. This

1 C.D., p. 682.

2 Ibid., pp. 360, 707. Cf. C.B., I, vol. 1, p. 99.

3 See below p. 77.

4 C.D., p. 703.

is particularly clear from the article in which he defends his tragedy Cato. The objection had been made that Caesar was as gross charakterisiert as Cato, the critic thereby implying that the interest and sympathy of the spectators was divided between the two instead of being concentrated on the hero. Gottsched, however, was concerned not with the dramatic technique but with the relative moral value of the characters of his play, and he interprets the criticism as follows: "Ein Poet soll freylich der Hauptperson seiner Fabel einen merklichen Vorzug vor allen übrigen geben und die Zuschauer dergestalt vor dieselbe einzunehmen suchen, dass nachmals das Schrecken und Mitleiden in den Unfällen derselben desto empfindlicher werde."¹ The Vorzug which he has in mind is undoubtedly a moral one, for he goes on to shew that the Caesar of his play cannot possibly be considered so great a hero as Cato, since the characteristics of the latter - love of country, generosity etc. - are such as befit a hero, while those of the former - lust for power and a craftily disguised tyranny - are not. Thus it is the kind of character - its degree of virtue - which makes a tragic hero, and not the dramatic treatment of it.

Gottsched admits that his Cato manifests one failing; he seems stubborn. But the hero, according to Aristotle, must be in some degree the cause of his own misfortune: "Wäre Cato ganz unschuldig, und vollkommen ohne Tadel gewesen; so würde man der Tugend einen schlechten Dienst gethan haben, wenn man ihn dennoch unglücklich werden lassen."² We see how completely his idea of the tragic hero is dependent on the moral principle which looms so large in his poetic theory. Drama must help to foster the idea that virtue is rewarded, but not that complete innocence may suffer. Hence the admission of a fault into Cato's character is justified because the moral order is thereby vindicated, and not, be it noted, because of the necessity of arousing pity rather than indignation in the spectator. The question of emotional and aesthetic effect is of only minor importance compared with that of services rendered to morality.

Elsewhere, however, Gottsched does refer to the effect

1 C.B., V, vol. 2, p. 51.

2 Ibid., p. 54.

which he expects tragedy to have on the spectator. It has to arouse emotions in a manner consistent with virtue ; the emotions he mentions are pity, fear, sadness and amazed admiration. More than this it must directly influence behaviour by fostering a stoical acceptance of misfortune and a belief in the ultimate punishment of evil by divine wrath. This is not to be done by sententious utterances of a moral nature strewn throughout the play, but by the selection and working out of a Fabel which illustrates a definite moral principle.¹ To this end is directed the whole construction of a tragedy: "Ein wohlgemachtes Trauerspiel zeigt mir nicht mehr als eine Hauptlehre. Es lehret mich eine Tugend lieben, oder ein Laster hassen: Alle übrige Dinge sind nichts anders als Hilfsmittel zu diesem Endzwecke zu gelangen."² The purging of the emotions, demanded by Aristotle, is, according to Gottsched, none other than the stiffening of the spectator so that he becomes less and less a prey to his emotions. How does this "purification of pity and fear" take place, he asks; and explains that, when a man first encounters the misfortunes of kings and heroes in tragedy, he is amazed and shocked that such things can happen to the great ones of the earth; henceforward, however, he is calmer in the face of his own misfortune since he now knows that no class is free of trouble and that his own woes are as nothing compared with those of the great. In this manner his fear is "purified". And, adds Gottsched, it is the same with pity. But into this more difficult aspect of the matter he does not venture to probe more deeply.³

With an eye to the public as well as to private good, he goes a step further. Not only does tragedy tend to make people satisfied with their own private lot, but also with the social class in which they happen to find themselves: "sie beförden.....die Zufriedenheit mit dem Stande darinn man sich befindet."⁴ He thus reveals more fully the potentialities of his project - the possibility of turning the stage not only to moral, but also to political advantage.

1 C.B., VIII, vol. 2, p. 652.

2 Ibid., p. 653.

3 C.B., XXIV, vol. 6, p. 599.

4 C.B., X, vol. 3, p. 302.

Just how completely Gottsched failed to understand what was meant by catharsis is shewn by his assumption that it could be achieved either by tragedy or by comedy: "Nun muss ich auch zeigen, dass die Opern oder Singspiele die Leidenschaften nicht reinigen können. Dass dieses Trauer - oder Lustspiele thun sollen und auch können, ist eine ausgemachte Sache."¹ This shews more than anything else that, for him, the rousing and purging of emotions was simply synonymous with teaching and preaching. What he, in effect, said to an audience was not: "Be moved!" but: "Observe, and draw conclusions for your own behaviour!"

But to thus interpret catharsis and so explain the purification of the emotions was only half the battle in writing about tragedy. Gottsched still had to account for the pleasure aroused, and this he found very difficult. The witnessing of other people's misfortunes gives rise to a certain pleasure because we rejoice that we ourselves are not in their position. Again the propaganda note is struck. Tragedy would appear to serve almost as a panacea for social distinctions, as a preventive against class envy: "Muss es nicht angenehm seyn, die grossen Unglücksfälle der Könige und Helden, die man sonst vor Glückskinder zu halten und deswegen zu beneiden pflegt, mit anzusehen: und bey sich in der Stille zu empfinden, dass man mit ihnen nicht täuschen möchte, indem man vor allem dem Elende, so sie erdulden müssen, befreyt ist?"² In reply to the objection that there is a trace of cruelty in the pleasure experienced when witnessing tragedy, Gottsched makes a typical reply, going for his reasons away from drama and the realm of art to the sphere of practical life. There might be some truth in this suggestion, he says, if one really took pleasure in seeing blood shed; or if those who die on the stage did, in reality, lose their life. But we know that no one dies just because he is acting the part of a dying person!³ This is in strange conflict with his demand for complete illusion, with his objection to rhyme in drama because he thinks it likely to prevent the spectator from imagining that he sees reality before him. On the other hand, it accords perfectly with the standards of probability which Gottsched was wont to apply to drama, with his complete incapacity to abandon himself to any imaginative illusion. He is content to explain the spectator's pleasure in tragedy, by his supposed re-

1 C.B., VIII, vol. 2, p. 656.

2 C.B., X, vol. 3, p. 300.

3 Ibid., p. 303.

collection that the suffering is not "real". Or else, as at one point, he admits defeat and denies that pleasure is experienced at all.

Little attempt is made by Gottsched to deal at all adequately with the problem of the relation of drama to history; presumably because, having once decided that the purpose of each drama is the elucidation and illustration of a moral principle, the matter did not present itself to him as a problem. In view of his reiterated demand that drama should approximate as closely as possible to the actuality on which it is based, it might at first seem surprising to find that he is no stickler for historical accuracy in tragedies built round historical themes. But when we recall his Fabel theory, we see at once that it could not well be otherwise. Somewhere, somehow he has to leave room for that inventiveness which he deemed the criterion of the poet. And so he tells us that the starting point of a historical tragedy, the germ of it, is not history at all, but the plot. This the poet invents; then he looks round in history for a similar event and gives to his characters the familiar, historical names connected with that episode in order to make them more "probable".¹ Having done this, he need not trouble himself further whether the course of action in the play follows the sequence of events in history, or whether the characters resemble their historical namesakes.² It suffices if the vague recalling of these people and these happenings serves to strengthen in the spectator the belief that what he is witnessing really could happen.

But this freedom which Gottsched grants to the poet is not any freedom of the imagination. It is not granted to him so that he may introduce into the casual flow of historical events the sharp nerve of tragic conflict; not that he may gather up loose ends, which tail off, meaningless, and tie them into a coherent knot; not even that he may imbue the pale, vague figures of statute and chronicle with the stuff of dramatic life. The sovereign authority which he allows his dramatist to assume over the raw material of history is for the furtherance of moral ends. Where history has lamentably failed in vindicating the moral order of the universe, the poet must step in and remedy the defect. His task is to bring order into chaos; not a dramatic, not an aesthetic, but a moral order.

1 C.D., p. 27.

2 Ibid., p. 674.

Although Gottsched thinks that tragedy is the high-water mark of literary achievement, it is when he writes about comedy that he really feels at home. Here he is at ease, in his own sphere. He is neither troubled by those bewildering elements of the miraculous with which he had to reckon when treating of the epic; nor is he disturbed by that disregard of plain fact which he encountered in the emotional outpourings of the lyric. And the didactic satire, which was what comedy then in fact amounted to, was more in tune with his own nature than the turbulent emotions of tragedy. Of these latter he was always inclined to be suspicious; hence his tendency to tame them down into pale, pedantic, and essentially harmless, shadows of themselves. Moreover the people portrayed by comedy - the middle-classes in the town - are the people whom he knew best, because he moved among them. More important even than that, they are the people among whom he hoped to spread his reforms, and whom he intended to educate. But it proved a little difficult to educate them up to high tragedy in one sweep. From comedy he could hope more,¹ for here they had the satisfaction of seeing themselves reflected and were, in consequence, not only edified, but gratified.

The traditional theory of comedy as Gottsched found it was admirably fitted to further his general plans. Great stress was laid on the didactic element; indeed this has tended to obtrude so much at the expense of laughter that it had resulted in the almost complete divorce of comedy from the comic. Gottsched does not go so far. The didactic element is, of course, kept well to the fore in his discussion of comedy, but the rôle of laughter is not overlooked. In fact he insists that comedy shall evoke loud laughter. It is true that he often wrote of comedy and tragedy as though the sole difference between them were the rank of the characters portrayed, even going so far as to attribute the same purging effect to both. But, despite this, he does admit that comedy, while having the same general function as tragedy, yet fulfils it in a way peculiar to itself. It differs both in the kind of failing it corrects and in the method adopted for the purpose.

What comedy is to correct are not those major faults of character which are liable to have serious consequences, but minor faults and vices, harmless enough in their effects, but undesirable in a reasonable human society. It focuses its revealing light on the in-

1 Cf. B. Aikin-Sneath, Comedy in Germany in the first half of the eighteenth century. Oxford, 1936, p. 18.

dividual, but not on the hidden places in him, the dark secrets of his nature; rather on the individual in his public and more superficial relations with others, on the lighter aspects of man in his position of social animal. In other words, it is concerned chiefly with morals as they express themselves in manners.

Not only must the faults and vices portrayed be of a superficial, non-serious character, they must also be ridiculous. This is an indispensable qualification. Gottsched insists on the joint presence of both these elements - vice and the ridiculous. They must be inseparably linked in comedy. The absence of either makes it impossible for a play to fall into this genre. Many vices are abhorrent and worthy of punishment rather than ridicule. The place to portray these is in tragedy. On the other hand, much that is merely ridiculous cannot possibly serve as subject-matter for comedy because it cannot be harnessed in the service of morality. One cannot hope that the character of a spectator will change for the better through merely laughing at playful clowning. The nature of the laughter which Gottsched expects comedy to call forth is made abundantly clear by his refusal to allow wholly virtuous characters to be portrayed as comic. Virtue, he says, calls forth our admiration, but never our laughter.¹ Laughter is thus associated with scorn. It is not joyous or sympathetic, but derisive and critical. Hence not only clowning is excluded from comedy, but also all comic of that unexpected kind which often centres round lovable and entirely innocent people and which evokes an amusement in which there is no trace of scorn or derision. We laugh with such characters, but not at them; they are lachenswürdig, but not auslachenswürdig. This haphazard kind of comic, not deliberately connected with the faults and vices of a character, nor introduced with the sole aim of focusing attention on these, does not evoke the disapproval which will help to eradicate similar faults in the spectator. Comedy is not to be merely comic and improving, but improving through being comic and - this the more important point - comic only where the comic is at the same time improving. It is not enough if the two elements exist side by side in a play. Each must be completely dependent on the other.

The faults which Gottsched wants to see ridiculed are deviations from the norm of an accepted standard of rational behaviour. Maladjustments, failures of adaptation, were generally

1 C.B., XXVIII, vol. 7, p. 579.

recognised as the cause of laughter. But the only kind of maladjustment which qualified for treatment in comedy was failure to make one's conduct conform with the current standards of social conduct. Such failure was considered unnatural, "natural" being synonymous with rational behaviour conducive to the general good. Thus Bodmer wrote in the Discourse der Mahlern: "Man ist befugt, alles zuraillieren, was keine Nothwendigkeit hat, und über die Natur austrittet....ihr werdet gleich sehen, dass das Laster von keiner Nothwendigkeit seye, und wieder die Natur und die Glückseligkeit des Menschen streite, dass es folglich das billge Object der Raillerie seye."¹ This was the general view, to which Gottsched also subscribed. Laughter at such social maladjustments involved a mental comparison between the behaviour of the comic character and normal standards, from which such behaviour represented a deviation. The standards which constituted the norm were those of the middle-class. Comedy was thus a force in upholding and preserving the form of life of that section of the community. We have already drawn attention to the almost propagandist value with which Gottsched endowed tragedy, imputing to it the power to make people content with their own class. In a somewhat similar way the potency of ridicule, as a weapon which could be used in the defence of a code of manners and behaviour, was fully recognised by him.²

Comedy was to fulfil its function of moral improvement in two ways. In common with all drama it had to illustrate a moral truth. Each comedy was to be built round a single "Lehre" and the purpose of the story was to drive home the lesson in a pleasant form. But, as we have seen, comedy employed, in addition to this, its own method of ridicule. We may ask just how this derisive laughter was expected to eradicate faults in the spectator. A passage from the Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen gives us the answer. The spectator identifies himself with the ridiculous character in the play and thus, as it were, is himself ridiculed by proxy: "So werden darinnen die Laster und übeln Gewohnheiten der Menschen lächerlich gemacht; den Nutzen und Schaden, der daraus erwachsen kann wird sehr lebhaft vorgestellt und die Zuschauer, die damit vielleicht behaftet sind, werden bewogen sich derselbigen zu entledigen; indem sie besorgen müssen, ebenso auslachenswürdig zu erscheinen, als die lasterhaften Personen auf dem Schauplatz

1 Die Discourse der Mahlern, ed. cit., I, St. XVIII.

2 Cf. Aikin-Sneath, op. cit., p. 18.

gewesen. Wer nun die allergeringste Ehrliche bei sich hat, der kann dies unmöglich erdulden: und es ist ihm unerträglich, wenn er anderen zum Gelächter werden soll. Darum machen diese Vorstellungen einen sehr tiefen Eindruck in seinem Gemüte, und sind oft kräftigere Bewegungsgründe, vom Bösen abzustehen, als die besten Vernunftschlüsse eines Sittenlehrers."¹

In the light of this passage it is easier to understand Gottsched's condemnation of the comédie larmoyante as being neither fish nor fowl, merely a senseless paradox. It was partly due, we noted above, to an unwillingness to interfere with the traditional class-distinctions of drama. Emotion and tears had always been the monopoly of the high-born in tragedy; the middle-classes had been confined to the lower sphere of comedy, with exclusive rights over laughter. However, as time went on, Gottsched was forced by the trend of events to make concessions in this respect. For the tendency to relax the rigid barriers, which had for so long upheld this kind of class-distinction in the emotional responses evoked by drama, was such, that at last we find him admitting the possibility of a mixed genre. But even then he withholds the name of comedy from the new genre, preferring to call it bürgerliches Trauerspiel.² He thus lifts the aristocratic monopoly on tears, and extends the privilege of arousing emotion to a lower rank, but still keeps firmly erect the barrier between laughter and tears. About this he remained adamant, never retracting his statement that the two were incompatible. And if we recall what he expects laughter to do, the function which was assigned to it, then it is understandable that he should refuse to allow sentiment and tears to intervene. The derisive laughter of the spectator, the lash of scorn, is directed at the behaviour of the comic character. Any rush of sympathy towards that character would defeat the aim, which was to ensure disapproval of such behaviour and a resolve on the part of the spectator never to be guilty of it himself, lest he, in turn, be ridiculed. Ridicule kills and is, therefore, an excellent weapon for eradicating anything undesirable; but clearly sympathy must be held at bay, since that has the reverse effect. As long as it was thought that the laughter evoked by comedy must be of the hostile kind which annihilates by ridicule, tears could have no place in the same play.

1 Die Vernünftigen Tadlerinnen, ed. cit., St. XV.

2 This was in the 4th edition of the Critische Dichtkunst, 1751.

On the whole Gottsched was able to invoke the principle of strict imitation more frequently and more convincingly in connection with comedy than anywhere else. In treating a form of drama which portrayed ordinary people and everyday events, it was neither inappropriate nor ill-timed to urge a measure of naturalness and realism. Here he could demand without compunction completely naturalistic dialogue and insist on the absence of rhyme or even of verse altogether. "Die Comödie," he urged, "fordert eine ungekünstelte, natürliche Art des Ausdruckes!"¹ and: "Die tragische Schreibart geht fast immer auf Stelzen die comische hergegen geht barfuss, ich meine, sie braucht die gemeine Sprache der Bürger."² Nevertheless much in his theory of comedy ran completely counter to his demand for realism. The exclusion from comedy of anything which might touch the emotions; the refusal to allow wholly virtuous characters to be treated in the comic spirit; the rejection of any humour not deliberately linked with the faults and vices round which the dramatic object lesson was planned, that is, of all purposeless, purely adventitious humour; the neglect of comedy based on situation and dialogue; all these are moves away from the colourful complexity, the paradoxes and inconsistencies of life. They represent yet another encroachment by his moral and didactic principles on the authority of the imitation theory.

The purpose of this survey of Gottsched was not so much to give a complete and detailed account of his theory, but rather to reveal the nature of his approach to literature. We have seen that the theory of imitation of nature, which he had proclaimed as the basic and unifying principle of all art, was often tacitly set aside while he proceeded to establish the rights of some other theory, regardless of whether this could be reconciled with the theory of strict imitation or not. Each time that he abandoned his main principle, there were either historical or practical reasons for the departure he made. And at the back of his mind were always two main considerations - the patriotic and the moral. Even these two were, in the last resort, but one, since if he was to carry out his patriotic project he had to establish once and for all the moral inviolability of literature.

1 C.D., p. 19.

2 Ibid., p. 260

Gottsched's motives are never disinterested or purely literary and that is why he fails to achieve a coherent poetic theory. His patriotism, which is the moving force behind all his activity, is in itself a very paradoxical thing.¹ It is, on the one hand, so acute as to merit the name of chauvinism; and yet it so frequently expresses itself in the emulation and imitation of things foreign. Why had the new repertoire to be of French manufacture or flavour? Why were Gottsched's pupils urged either to translate or to imitate what had already been translated?

Gottsched did indeed admire the literary achievements of the French, but in his writings he frequently betrays hatred of foreign nations, of the French no less than of any other. Thus he could write on one occasion that the French were to the Germans what the Greeks were to the Romans; that they offered "die schönsten Muster in allen grossen Gattungen der Poesie."² But this does not prevent him from urging elsewhere that, although the Greeks served as models for the Romans, the latter finally succeeded in far outstripping their masters, and the terms of the parallel he draws between his own nation and the Romans suggest an overweening chauvinism.³ The aggressively competitive nature of his reform movement emerges clearly in a remark such as the following: "Solche poetische Kleinigkeiten bringen einer Nation nicht viel Ehre. Es muss was grössers seyn, womit man sich gegen andre Völker breit machen, und ihren Dichtern trotz bieten will."⁴ His interest is not in the achievement but in comparison with others. His ultimate aim was to be beyond the need of help from foreigners altogether. As soon as a few original plays begin to come in, he urges very strongly the need for independence, while the envy and dislike which he felt for the French, despite his imitation of them, are increasingly apparent in the prefaces to the several volumes of the

1 Cf. F. Neumann, Gottsched und die Leipziger Deutsche Gesellschaft, Archiv für Kulturgeschichte, XVIII, 1928, p. 209.

2 C.D., p. 42.

3 Lob - und Gedächtnisrede auf Opitz, ed. cit., p. 29.

4 C.D., p. 89.

Schaubühne.¹

The position may appear confusing, but to Gottsched's mind it was all very simple and clear. The German nation was to become the most cultured nation in Europe. Gottsched could not but realise that, as things stood, the French held this position. Hence they were the people to emulate; and this, to his mind, could only be done by competing with them on their own ground. Only by producing better dramas of the same type as the French could the Germans ever hope to equal them. It would, he thought, be no indication of success if good drama, in a totally different tradition, were produced, and his aim is never native drama in that sense. The French are, then, not only rivals but models and that is why there could be no question of his adapting Haupt - und Staatsaktionen for his repertoire. Nor must it be forgotten that the German public was more and more inclined to a French way of life,² and it is doubtful whether the type of play which might have pleased a naive audience could any longer satisfy those classes which Gottsched particularly wished to attract.

The whole project for reform bears the stamp of his own peculiar patriotism. He even succeeded in communicating it to the actors, and we find Neuber referring to Castellan, the translator of Cinna, as "dieser hiesige Patriot."³ The practical results which he achieved are undoubtedly due to his skill in harnessing all the forces he could command and directing them to a single goal. But the conflict within him between his patriotism and his desire to introduce French standards was conducive neither to good theory nor to good criticism. It led to a confused state of mind and consequently to conflicting judgments. This is particularly apparent in his attitude to a poet like Günther. His patriotism tempts him to list as many German poets as possible. But the new programme, the new standards which he wishes to establish, demand that he shall condemn many of them. Both his patriotism and

1 Cf. Deutsche Schaubühne, ed. cit., I, pp. 19,20; II, pp. 26,27; IV, p. 4.

2 Cf. Servaes, op. cit., p. 17.

3 Letter of July 21, 1731, Reden-Esbeck, op. cit., p. 101.

his judgment urge him to hail Günther as a great poet, whose lucidity and purity of style others would do well to emulate. But on the other hand there is the irregularity of his life which so ill-accords with Gottsched's dictum that the poet must be an honourable man and a good citizen. Günther always remained a problem and he never succeeded in "placing" him to his own satisfaction.

Gottsched's desire to shew that Germany could muster a goodly number of poets also accounts for his scepticism about the divine inspiration of the poet, and for his claim that poets are not born but made. The numerous rules which he sets up for the benefit of young poets mostly conflict with the doctrine of imitation of nature. But since his business is the training of young poets any rules which can be easily applied are acceptable to him, no matter in what theory of poetry they may have their origin. Creativeness has to be made into something which can be learnt because, if his schemes are to prosper, literature must be produced. Hence Gottsched's definition of probability as "die Ähnlichkeit des Erdichteten mit dem was wirklich zu geschehen pflegt." This is the reduction of invention, of creation itself, to a rule - so that it can be taught and learned.

In view of this it is not surprising that the zeal of the reformer so often conflicts with the programme of the aesthetician. It does so whenever insistence on regular form becomes stronger than the demand for natural content. "Naturalness" was useful as a slogan with which to combat the artificiality and pretentiousness of the literature that had gone before. But to insist on it too much was to run the risk of vulgarity and it was this and not only bombast and euphuism which Gottsched wished to avoid. Thus he says: "Freylich sind alle Arten des Ausdrucks demjenigen, der sie braubhet, natürlich. Auch ein Fritschmeister redet in seinen garstigen Possen, dadurch er die Grossen belustigen will, seiner Natur gemäss, das ist albern und schmutzig."¹ The question, when advocating "naturalness", was therefore, where to draw the line; how to avoid the artificial and yet, at the same time, to emulate the propriety and elegance of French style. It is the desire to

1 C.D., p. 328.

make his work acceptable to as wide a public as possible that really governs his treatment of the language question; that is to say, it is governed by practical considerations and not by any theory. He wished to avoid, on the one hand, wild flights of fancy, unacceptable to the healthy, day-light commonsense of the man in the street; on the other, any vulgarity and indecency which might prevent drama from acquiring the hall-mark of respectability. The demand for the "natural" style aimed at avoiding the first pitfall; the insistence that it must nevertheless be a "poetic" style at avoiding the second. Thus in the matter of language the imitation principle undergoes modification; a certain selectiveness is exercised; a poet is not expected to imitate grammatical errors or peculiarities of dialect any more than a painter is expected to reproduce the freckles on a face!¹ But, it will be noted, selection is not determined by artistic considerations at all but by either propriety or by correctness in the grammatical sense.

This desire to establish the drama as a force in public life by proclaiming its moral power is partly responsible, too, for his attachment to the Fabel theory. His insistence that the poet must invent is not strictly in tune with the imitation theory; but it is attractive to Gottsched because he could instruct the poet to give a moral turn to his every invention. As Servaes points out,² Gottsched saw that poets had never given more than a modified reflection of reality and that the essence of poetry lay somewhere in this modification. He could not ignore this important fact. But, lacking all imagination himself and having in its place a very highly developed practical sense, he sought the essence of poetry in something he could grasp and decided that the poet's modification of reality should be directed towards presenting a universe in which good always triumphs over evil. This fitted in admirably with his general projects, but to reconcile it with the theory of strict imitation, he had, as we saw, to resort to the theory of "possible worlds". This, however, was only a makeshift and in no way a conviction, and as soon as it is put to the test in a matter

1 Cited by Reichel (op. cit., p. 509) from Diskurs des Übersetzers von Gesprächen überhaupt, which preceded Gottsched's translation of Fontenelle's Gespräche der Todten, 1727.

2 Servaes, op. cit., p. 28.

of public policy, he abandons it. For, theoretically speaking, it should, of course, have enabled him to approve of opera; instead of which he condemns this form using arguments which, in the light of his theory of "possible worlds", are exactly the reverse of what we should expect. What he in fact does, is to oppose the presentation of other worlds, as seen in opera, to the principle of imitation of nature, finding here an irreconcilable contradiction. But motives other than the desire for naturalism are behind this attack on opera. The naturalistic principle had frequently to yield to other considerations. Why not here? A remark about music gives us the clue: "Wollte man auch die Opern eben so ordentlich und regelmässig vorstellen, als die Trauer- und Lustspiele, wollte man alle Verzierungen und Maschinen des Schauplatzes verwerfen: O so würde doch die einzige Musik, als welche der wesentliche Theil derselben ist, den lehrenden Zweck verhindern."¹ We see how the non-theoretical, non-aesthetic reason creeps in. Gottsched's quarrel with opera is not simply that it does not fit in with the imitation theory. His wholly rational mind cannot conceive of any beneficial effect which might come from listening to music. The sensuous appeal will, he thinks, have a softening, enervating effect, not conducive to the common good. Once again the motive which prompts him to acceptance or rejection of the various theories at his disposal is the same practical consideration for the class from which he hopes to recruit his regular patrons.

With each compromise that he makes, Gottsched drives into the imitation theory a wedge which militates against complete naturalism. But do these wedges, however deeply they are driven, make for a more fruitful interpretation of the theory itself? It is true that if the principle of imitation of nature is to be of any value at all in aesthetics, if it is to provide any answer to our questions about the relation of art to nature, it must be qualified and limited and its import more closely defined; and throughout the eighteenth century we find constant reinterpretation of the principle, leading ultimately to that profound understanding of the nature of art which was achieved by Goethe and Schiller. But does Gottsched contribute anything at all towards this process of reinterpretation? Susi Bing² in her book on

¹ C.B., VIII, vol. 2, p. 654.

² S. Bing, Die Nachahmungstheorie bei Gottsched und den Schweizern und ihre Beziehung zu der Dichtungstheorie der Zeit, Würzburg, 1934.

the treatment of the imitation theory in the early part of the eighteenth century suggests that he does. She quite rightly stresses the inaccuracy of speaking of naturalism in connection with Gottsched and goes on to contend that the overthrow of the imitation theory is already implicit in his confusion as regards such terms as nature and imitation. While this may be true, we must be careful to see exactly what it means.

The tendency of art away from nature is never consciously admitted by Gottsched. It has to be inferred from his writings, supplied by the reader, and is, therefore, not part and parcel of his imitation theory. The total impression made by Gottsched's writings and the plays which he inspired is not naturalistic; but this does not ensue from aesthetic principles which conceive of art as idealising nature. It ensues from semi-moral, semi-conservative views about what is fitting as regards the subject matter of art. However deeply wedges are driven into the imitation theory by Gottsched, they come from spheres outside the aesthetic sphere. Within this sphere itself he never retreated from the position that the underlying principle of art is imitation of the closest and crudest kind. Whatever concessions and compromises are made, there is no attempt to fit them into the imitation theory nor to reconcile them with it. Thus, because of tradition, and to further didactic aims, he wanted the characters of drama to be simple types. But the imitation theory prompts him to demand that characters shall be true to life; and so he continues to urge this too, apparently undismayed that these conflicting demands thus stand side by side in his theory, unreconciled. It does not occur to him to find aesthetic justification for the typical characters he requires by modifying his basic principle. Neither here nor elsewhere does he redefine his attitude towards it in the light of the various compromises he has had to make. Whatever the bulk of his theory may imply, he himself never admits that art is, in some respects, unlike nature. Ostensibly the principle of strict imitation is maintained throughout, and however much in practice Gottsched may circumvent and tacitly disobey it, he never denies its authority.

Thus he contributes nothing to a more fruitful interpretation of the principle. Imitation of nature is indeed for him merely a convenient sort of battle-cry; one in which he undoubtedly believes and constantly flaunts; but one which he has, nevertheless, taken over on trust. He never comes to grips with it nor attempts to investigate whether it is compatible with his principle of morality, with the various rules which he wishes to see observed by his young pupils, with the

theory of the fable. He undoubtedly compromises with strict imitation, but it is a compromise and nothing more. He never recognises, much less makes it a point of his theory, that something of the essence of art lies in its dissimilarity with nature. And unnaturalistic as is the net result of his theory and practice, he yet subordinates art to nature in the most ignominious way; namely by applying the commonsense standards of practical life in the appreciation and criticism of poetry.

For the principle which really guides him, the one which so conveniently enables him to justify every volte-face in his theory and supplies the sole measure for his criticism and appreciation, is not imitation at all, but this practical, every-day kind of probability. Despite the remark of one of the Tadlerinnen that poetry is "ein Geschenk des Himmels",¹ one does not learn from Gottsched, and he did not feel, what distinguishes the world of poetry from the world of every-day. More than this. He failed even to realise that they were different worlds. He is not only not a poet, but not a poetic nature. The poetic imagination remains for ever a closed book to him; and these same Tadlerinnen, only a very few weeks later, reduce "the gift from heaven" to an encyclopaedic knowledge on the most varied subjects, urging that the poet must be familiar with "den Ackerbau, die Fischerey und das Jagdwesen, die Kriegskünste und die Politik, ja wol gar die Arzneykunst und Gottesgelahrtheit, wenn er sich nicht in Gefahr setzen will, alle Augenblicke zu verstossen".² Gottsched's conception of the creation of a poem is a sort of technical feat, something to try one's hand at: "denn in der That ist es wahr, dass es keine Kunst seyn würde, Verse zu machen: wenn es einem frey stünde, nach seiner Phantasie, die Wörter auszudehnen und zu verkleinern."³ The merit of the achievement thus increases with the size of the obstacle, and he seizes avidly on Horace's comparison of a poet with a tight-rope walker, and enlarges upon it, for it is exactly to his liking.

1 Reichel, ed. cit., II, p. 78.

2 Ibid., p. 154.

3 C.D., p. 277.

If his lack of poetic imagination leaves him thus without any inkling of how the poet creates, it makes him equally impotent in appreciation and criticism. To the sensuous appeal of poetry, he is, as we have seen, deaf and blind. Rhyme and rhythm should, he thinks, be as little noticeable as possible; indeed the long lines of tragedy are preferable to the short ones of opera for the strange reason that, if they are spoken naturally, one can, after a while, forget that the play is in verse at all!¹ This lack of feeling for rhythm and sound naturally forces him back on to logical meaning as the criterion of what is good or bad in poetry. Music "macht Männer zu Weibern und erwachsene Leute zu Kindern."² One notes the order here; it is a hierarchy of reason, and it is solely through the reason, he thinks, that literature can exercise any beneficial effect. Hence his suggestion that, if the text of a libretto is capable of improving, one might as well read it, since it cannot be properly understood when sung.³ The cumulative effect of the whole work of art is thus ignored, and its significance limited to the message which it conveys to the intellect.

But it is his confusion of the aesthetic with the practical sphere, his complete inability to keep them separate, which leads him to the most ridiculous statements. The two chapters of the Dichtkunst, Von dem Wunderbaren in der Poesie and Von der Wahrscheinlichkeit, abound in the most ludicrous kind of reasoning and reveal Gottsched at his most prosaic. Two examples here must suffice to shew how incapable he was of criticising poetry in terms of poetry. The first is in his criticism of Besser's Klageredicht on the death of his wife. Gottsched feigns bewilderment; for Besser was moved to utter this lament by the sight of the funeral procession on the street, as is expressly stated in the poem! But surely this is incredible. "Ging er denn irgend nicht mit zu Grabe? Oder hatte er auf der Gasse Zeit, sie so sinnreich zu beklagen?" Horrified by the improbability which becomes apparent once practical considerations are brought into play, Gottsched

1 C.B., X, vol. 3, p. 291.

2 Ibid., p. 306.

3 C.B., VIII, vol. 2, p. 653.

concludes: "Besser hat als ein künstlicher Poet; nicht als ein trostloser Witwer geweint."¹ The charge of artificiality is undoubtedly not without foundation, but the methods by which Gottsched arrives at such a judgment are quite indefensible. This invasion of the aesthetic sphere by the commonsense arguments of practical life cuts at the very root of poetry, here of lyric poetry, in the next example of dramatic poetry, which, so much more than any other, invites comparison with actuality, and which yet lives and has its being in and through conventions. To strike at these by applying the practical foot-rule is to threaten the very life of drama; yet Gottsched does not hesitate to apply it even to the drama of the Greeks. "Oedipus, their king, appears among them and says: I am Oedipus, famed throughout the world... Is it probable" asks Gottsched earnestly, "that the people of Thebes did not know their king?"²

Trying to build an aesthetic theory on probability of this kind is like building on shifting sands. It is hopeless, if only for the reason that it can lead to diametrically opposed conclusions about one and the same problem, according to how it is applied. Thus it can lead Gottsched in one context to deplore the cadenzas with which the operatic hero prolongs the moments of his death, because they make it appear that he is not really dying,³ while elsewhere, as we saw, he protests, that to enjoy the death of the tragic hero, does not mean that we take a cruel pleasure in the shedding of blood, because we know all the time that he does not really die.⁴ In the first instance, the application of commonsense standards leads to a demand for greater illusion; in the second, to exactly the reverse, to the destruction of any kind of illusion whatsoever. Gottsched is never clear about the relation between the reader or spectator and the world of poetry, because he has not even a faint inkling that poetry is a world of its own. He himself does not stand in any precise and well-defined relation even to the characters of his own plays. How far they were 'real' to him we can only guess; but that he was still uncertain of their motives even after he had completed the play, we can assert with confidence, because of the groping

1 C.D., p. 180.

2 Ibid., p. 207.

3 Ibid., p. 415.

4 Cf. above, p. 46.

hesitancy with which he speaks of them when replying to the criticism of his Cato. The critic had suggested that during the exposition of the play, when Cato's character is being unfolded for the benefit of the audience, he himself approaches, and that it is highly probable that he overhears what is said about him. Instead of frankly admitting this as a fault or, on the other hand, boldly defending it as a pure convention, Gottsched lamely suggests that it was "perhaps" intended by the speakers that he should overhear, so that he might know how highly they thought of him.¹ The "perhaps" is extraordinary coming from the author of the drama, and reveals how completely he was not a poet! To comply with the demands of a certain crude probability is far more important in his eyes than to have a clear conception of what his characters intend and imply.

All these contradictions and paradoxes are only to be explained if we remember that Gottsched's theory was never intended as an end in itself but as part of a big, practical enterprise, of which the plays of the Schaubühne are the culmination. The prefaces to the various volumes of these plays, together with the illustrations and examples of the second part of the Dichtkunst, form the link between theory and practice. Gottsched was the self-appointed public teacher of poetic theory, and the test of his success was bound to be the apparent capacity of his theory to be applicable in every single genre of literature. "Je grösser bei einem einfachen Grundgedanken die Consequenz in der Durchführung erscheint, desto wirksamer sind die Anregungen, die aus den einzelnen Anweisungen und Ratschlägen hervorgehen können," says Servaes,² and it is significant that there is no illustrative part to Breitinger's Critische Dichtkunst.

It is easy enough to mock at Gottsched and to pull his theory and criticism to pieces until he is left without a leg to stand on. To do nothing but this, is to miss entirely his significance in the development of German literature. We have seen how little feeling and understanding he had for poetry. The unfortunate

1 C.B., V, vol. 2, pp. 39, 50.

2 Servaes, op. cit., p. 2.

thing was that he claimed to be both a competent critic and a poet and thus threw out a challenge to posterity to judge him on those grounds. Hence the ridicule which was for so long his portion. But in reality it is outside poetry, either its creation or appreciation, that we have to look when trying to estimate his importance - indeed outside the sphere of art altogether. He is in essence a Lebensreformer and in poetry he saw merely an excellent means for achieving this end. Quite firmly he tied together the two things, poetry and life; and in doing this particularly with one kind of poetry, namely the drama, he made his great contribution to German literature. For the stage now becomes the place where poets speak through the actors. "Was den schlesischen Dichterschulen seiner Zeit nicht gelungen war, das erreichte jetzt die Gottsched-Neubersche, nämlich literarischen Einfluss wieder auf die Bühne geltend zu machen."¹ The stage was set; without that setting how little could have been achieved by anyone. The spade-work Gottsched had done left others with greater talent free to plant. This is the aspect of him which should be emphasised in any final judgment. But in a historical account it is necessary to set out all the weaknesses and limitations of his theory and criticism because on these hinged the next advances. As all progress comes through conflict and reaction, so in the development of literature and poetic theory advance came through those who fought against his precepts, regardless of his services.

His achievement is to have introduced seriousness and purpose into German poetry, to have linked it up with life by recognising its power to affect life. His weakness is his narrow and crude interpretation of the serious purpose of poetry, his complete failure to distinguish a poetic world, and to realise that, although it does affect life, it does so in accordance with the laws of its own nature.

1 Reden-Esbeck, op. cit., p. 72.

CHAPTER II

AN ANALYSIS OF SCHLEGEL'S THEORIES

Introductory

Johann Elias Schlegel arrived in Leipzig in March, 1739, bringing with him something of a reputation. Besides having an excellent record as a scholar at Schulpforta, he was known to have tried his hand at drama, and his work had not only enjoyed a surreptitious performance by his admiring schoolfellows, but one of his plays had even had the honour of public presentation by Frau Neuber.¹ Here was someone who looked like furthering the plans of Gottsched, now at the height of his power and reputation; a promising talent which might yet prove to be the hope of the new German drama.

There can be no doubt that Gottsched extended a warm welcome to the newcomer, was eager to guide him by criticism and suggestion, and to regard him in general as a pupil and disciple. Not quite so much certainty exists that the feeling was wholly reciprocated, that Schlegel was ready to accept the guidance and to play the rôle assigned to him. The position was for some time obscured by the attempts of J. Adolf Schlegel² to shew that his brother had never at any time been closely associated with Gottsched. But the whole question has since been clarified by Johannes Rentsch³ in a study of the relationship between the two and it would now seem clear that Schlegel owed much to Gottsched. More particularly he was indebted to him for opportunities of publishing his work,⁴ and it was not until after he left Leipzig that Schlegel preferred

- 1 This was Orestes und Pylades, performed early in 1739 in Leipzig. For details of this early period, cf. Johann Elias Schlegel, Werke, V, Kopenhagen und Leipzig, 1770, pp. XVIII ff.
- 2 For details of this, cf. Danzel, op. cit., pp. 154 - 8.
- 3 Johannes Rentsch, Johann Elias Schlegel als Trauerspieldichter mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Gottsched, Leipzig, 1890, pp. 4 - 32.
- 4 Rentsch, op. cit., pp. 6, 14.

not to avail himself of Gottsched's periodicals for this purpose.¹ Rentsch notes the concessions which Schlegel from time to time made to Gottsched when publishing in his journals, and commends, too, the tact which led him to shew in his letters the respect due to a former teacher even after they were becoming estranged.²

The conclusions thus formed by Rentsch are amply borne out by letters from Gottsched to Schlegel, and from Schlegel to his father, which have only recently become available.³ The case for Schlegel's aloofness from the beginning can scarcely be defended, in view of the tone which he uses when referring to Gottsched in an early letter to his father³ where there was no reason for him to dissimulate, and it must now be accepted that he was, at least for a time, a grateful pupil of Gottsched.

This fact is not in any way incompatible with a certain independence of outlook which can be traced even in the earliest of Schlegel's writings; it often appears side by side with views which are scarcely distinguishable from those of Gottsched. Probably the earliest manifestation of such independence of judgment is reflected in his decision to translate Sophocles' Electra into rhymed verse, although Gottsched had requested him

- 1 This was about 1745. Cf. a letter from Schlegel to Gottsched of 4. May, 1745, published by K. Seeliger (Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Meissen, Bd. II, Heft II, Meissen, 1888, no. 7), in which Schlegel offers a rather clumsy excuse for his failure to send Orestes und Pylades for publication in the Schaubühne. Rentsch (op. cit., p. 20) is of the opinion that this was probably the immediate cause of the break with Gottsched. Cf. also letters to Hagedorn, 4 September, 1743, (Hagedorn's Werke ed. Eschenburg, Hamburg, 1800, V.) and to Bodmer in 1746 (G.F. Ständlin, Briefe berühmter und edler Deutschen an Bodmer, Stuttgart, 1794).
- 2 Rentsch, op. cit., pp. 28, 29. The estrangement begins about the middle of 1743 and appears to have been complete by the end of 1746. Cf. Seeliger, op. cit., letters 7, 8 and my article, Some Unpublished Letters from the Correspondence of Johann Elias Schlegel, (Modern Language Review, XXXIV, July, 1939, pp. 398, 399).
- 3 See my article ed. cit., in particular letter I and p. 397.

to do an unrhymed version.¹ And in his first published piece of writing, the Schreiben über die Comödie in Versen,² Schlegel comes out into the open on this very question. For, despite the more profound implications of this essay, its immediate purpose was to reply to an attack on the use of rhyme in comedy made by a confirmed supporter of Gottsched, G.B. Straube.³ The friendly nature of this dispute is wholly characteristic of Schlegel. He prided himself on being able to conduct a lively argument without any hint of personal animosity⁴ and, no doubt, believed at this stage that it would be possible for him to pursue his own way in literature and literary theory, undisturbed and unhampered by the personal jealousy and anger of others.

His stay in Leipzig was of three years duration and was a period of fairly intense productivity. Having already some experience in dramatic writing, he now turned his attention to the theory of drama and thence to the principles of art in general. Soon after his arrival he wrote a letter about Greek tragedy to his brother Johann Adolf Schlegel, who was still at school.⁵ The independence of his views is apparent here in his discerning criticism of the taste of the period and of the avowed models of Gottsched: the dramas of the French. And it is this independence again, which gives character to the three pieces of dramatic criticism which appeared in the year 1741:

- 1 Cf. art. cit., pp. 397, 402.
- 2 Schreiben an den Herrn N.N. über die Comödie in Versen (C.B., 24, 1740, pp. 624 - 651, Werke, III, pp. 65 - 94).
- 3 Versuch eines Beweises, dass eine gereimte Comödie nicht gut seyn könne (C.B., 23, 1740, pp. 466 - 485). Straube replied to Schlegel's article with Andere Vertheidigung der nicht gereimten Comödie (C.B., 26, 1741, pp. 287 - 313).
- 4 Cf. his letter to Bodmer, 19 April, 1746 (Ständlin ed. cit., p.30).
- 5 This was published in the works under the title: Auszug eines Briefes welcher einige kritische Anmerkungen über die Trauerspiele der Alten und Neuern enthält (Werke, III, pp. 203, ff: J. von Antoniewicz, Johann Elias Schlegels Aesthetische und Dramaturgische Schriften, Heilbronn, 1887, Deutsche Literaturdenkmale, 26, pp. 2, ff.).

Klajs Herodes der Kindermörder, Demokrit, ein Todtengespräche and the Vergleichung Shakespears und Andreas Gryphs.¹ This last is of historical importance as the first appreciation of Shakespeare to appear in the German language, and it contrasts sharply with Gottsched's sweeping condemnation.² Apart from this, there is nothing which might be called revolutionary in any of these three essays. So subtly is the strand of independent thought woven in with accepted views that a cursory reading might fail to reveal it; but inconspicuous as it is, it lends to the essays that flavour of maturity which is so markedly absent from almost all other contributions to the Critische Beyträge.

The year 1741 also saw the production of one piece of aesthetic writing. In the essay Von der Unähnlichkeit in der Nachahmung,³ Schlegel subjected the principle of imitation of nature, which was unquestionably accepted as the basis of all the arts, to a scrutiny of the closest kind. The result of this scrutiny was the formulation of a rule limiting the scope of imitation. The essay was read by Schlegel on 2 December, 1741, to Gottsched's Redner-gesellschaft, but was not included in the collection of Übungsreden of this society published by J.C. Löschenkohl in 1743. Here, Schlegel was indeed expressing views never even hinted at by Gottsched, and which embodied a conception of art utterly opposed to his, and it has been suggested that it was for this reason that the essay was not published in the official collection.⁴ But in 1742, Schlegel developed his theme in the much more comprehensive

- 1 Herodes der Kindermörder, nach Art eines Trauerspiels ausgebildet und in Nürnberg einer teutschliebenden Gemeine vorgestellt, durch Hohann Klaj, Nürnberg, 1645 (C.B., 27, 1741; Werke, III, pp. 1 ff; Ant. pp. 31 ff.); Demokritus, ein Todtengespräche (Belustigung des Verstandes und des Witzes, 1741, Augustmonat; Werke, III, pp. 177 ff; Ant. pp. 51 ff.); Vergleichung Shakespears und Andreas Gryphs bey Gelegenheit des Versuchs einer gebundenen Uebersetzung von dem Tode des Julius Cäsar, aus den Englischen Werken des Shakespear, Berlin, 1741 (C.B., 28, 1741; Werke, III, pp. 27 ff; Ant. pp. 71 ff.).
- 2 Cf. C.D., 3rd. ed. 1742, pp. 714 ff. A more detailed discussion in an article: Anmerkungen über das 592. Stück des Zuschauers (C.B., 29, 1742).
- 3 Abhandlung, dass die Nachahmung der Sache, der man nachahmet, zuweilen unähnlich werden müsse (Neue Beyträge zum Vergnügen des Verstandes und Witzes, 5, 1745; Werke, III, 163 ff; Ant. pp. 96 ff.).
- 4 Cf. J.H. Schlegel, Werke, III, p. 165.

Abhandlung von der Nachahmung.¹ Despite the fact that the views expressed in this were equally at variance with his own theories, Gottsched published part of it in the Beyträge, and it was probably a desire to avoid the repetition of the same ideas in another publication under his auspices, that accounted for the non-inclusion of the earlier essay in Löschenkohl's collection.²

These years in Leipzig are then, not only productive, but shew Schlegel on more than one occasion striking out on his own, even in direct opposition to Gottsched. It is therefore natural that this tendency should become more marked as the spatial distance between them increased. From Leipzig, Schlegel went to Dresden³ and after a few weeks there, obtained an appointment as secretary to Graf von Spener, Saxon ambassador at the Danish court. Early in 1743 he proceeded in his new capacity to Copenhagen. There follows now a period of almost three years in which no critical or theoretical work appears, a period broken only by the publication of one drama and that written several years before.⁴ This is clearly a time when Schlegel is taking stock of the new conditions under which he is to live, learning the language and assimilating new impressions and knowledge. He was not the man to let the culture of this new country remain a closed book to him, and the periodical which he published weekly during the year 1745⁵, reveals with what sympathetic interest he penetrated into the history, customs and literature of the Danish people. More than any other of his works, this reveals the man; kindly, yet slightly aloof, humane and tolerant, yet fastidiously discriminating; no polemic fighter, the reverse of a revolutionary, possessing great respect for tradition, but nevertheless willing to submit this, as all else, to the light of reasoned criticism. His seriousness and transparent sincerity are leavened by a profound regard for the social virtues and graces. His views on education are a joy

1 C.B., 29, 1742, contains § 1 - 15, C.B., 31, 1743, § 16 -21. The rest of the essay was first published in the Neuer Bücher-saal der Schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste, 5, 1745 (Werke, III, pp. 95 ff; Ant., pp. 106 ff.)

2 Cf. Antoniewicz, ed. cit., p. XC.

3 Towards the end of 1742. Cf. Werke, V, p. XXX.

4 This was Dido, written early in 1739 (Cf. Seeliger, op. cit., letter no. 5) and published in the Deutsche Schaubühne, V, 1744.

5 Der Fremde, Copenhagen, 1745; Werke, V, pp. 9 ff.

to read, even in these pedagogically enlightened days. Although he can attack with some force and is by no means averse to the use of wit, his sting is never sharp, and the weapon he prefers, is that of persuasion by lucid, reasoned argument, calculated neither to cause sensation nor to provoke attack.

During this period, in addition to making the acquaintance of things Danish, Schlegel undoubtedly deepened his knowledge of English literature; and his later works, dramas as well as critical writings, shew that these new impressions were not without influence on his thought. A second group of theoretical writings began to appear in 1746.¹ As earlier in Leipzig, when an attack on comedy in verse provoked him to write his first article, so now, too, the stimulus came from without and was of a practical nature. With the accession in 1746 of Frederick V, a more enlightened and less puritanical ruler than his predecessor, hopes of a new theatre in Copenhagen could be realised. Schlegel, doubtless at the request of Danish friends, advanced suggestions of a purely practical kind regarding this venture, embodying his views in the Schreiben von Errichtung eines Theaters in Kopenhagen.² This excursion into the sphere of practical theatre management, which was not without influence on the history of the theatre in Germany, he followed up in the next year with Gedanken zur Aufnahme des dänischen Theaters.³ also designed to be of assistance to the promoters of the new theatre. Here, however, Schlegel was not concerned with suggestions for practical management, but with hints and advice on the choice of the repertoire. This led him to a discussion of dramatic theory, and his opinions, although foreshadowed in the writings of his earlier Leipzig period, appear now in more fully developed form and are expressed with greater certainty and emphasis. The essay gives that impression of maturity and authority which results when an author speaks with conviction, and it forms the peak of Schlegel's dramatic theory.

1 1745 had seen the appearance of a preface to the translation of Destouches' Le Glorieux. This preface, included by Antoniewicz in the volume of aesthetic and dramatic writings, is now generally accepted as being from Schlegel's pen.

2 Werke, III, pp. 251 ff. This essay is not included in the selection made by Antoniewicz.

3 Werke, III, pp. 259 ff; Ant., pp. 193 ff.

The essay Über die Würde und Majestät des Ausdrucks im Trauerspiele¹ has something of the same quality. It was written as a preface to a volume of his plays which Schlegel published in 1747 under the title of Theatralische Werke, and is more remarkable for certain passages of sensitive appreciation, than for its contribution to any theory of the sublime. It is in these passages that that sureness of touch which we noted in the Gedanken zur Aufnahme des dänischen Theaters again makes itself clearly felt, and increases our sense of regret that a talent which shewed so much power of growth, should not have come to full maturity.²

Schlegel's theoretical writings fall then into two groups, separated by a period of three years. During the first period in Leipzig, dramatic theory and criticism appear simultaneously with aesthetic treatises on the theory of imitation. The works of the second period in Copenhagen are concerned with dramatic theory alone. These later works are, too, of an altogether more practical character, each of them being written with a definite purpose in view. Their point of departure is not that of philosophic speculation, but the practical needs of the time. Because of this specifically practical character and, doubtless, too, because of the space of time which separates the two groups, it has been claimed that the later ones shew not only a distinct advance on the earlier, but that they also imply a rejection of earlier theories, particularly of many of the views advanced in the Abhandlung von der Nachahmung.³ Now, it is admittedly

1 Vorrede to the Theatralische Werke, durch Johann Elias Schlegel, Copenhagen, 1747 (Werke, III, pp. 213 ff; Ant., pp. 167 ff.).

2 Schlegel died on the 13 August, 1749, at the age of 30.

3 Cf. the arguments of Eugen Wolff (Johann Elias Schlegel. Eine Monographie, Berlin, 1889) on the change and development in Schlegel's views (esp. pp. 76 ff. and 153 ff.). Wolff assumes that Schlegel grew out of his imitation theory in spite of himself. Such an interpretation seems to me to arise from a failure to distinguish between the aesthetic experience in general, and the various methods by which each art in its own way contrives to give rise to that experience.

N.B. Wolff's note (p. 145, note 388) to the effect that Schlegel referred to a plan to write a dramaturgy based on his imitation theory in a letter to Bodmer, 15 April, 1747 (Ständlin, op. cit.) is an error. The reference is in a letter to Bodmer, 18 September, 1747, published by J. Crüger (Archiv für Literaturgeschichte, Bd. XIV, Leipzig, 1886).

impossible not to recognise progress in Schlegel's theoretical work; he is eminently capable of growth, both in knowledge and appreciation as well as in thought. The independence which can be traced, even in his earliest work, becomes ever more marked; the similarity with Gottsched ever less apparent. But although this development of what was present in the beginning, the growing affirmation of it and the change from tentativeness to certainty are clearly revealed by a close analysis of Schlegel's works, nothing emerges from such an analysis to support the view that the later works represent a completely new outlook and a consequent rejection of his earlier theories.

On the contrary, the most remarkable thing about Schlegel's theory and that which, more than any single aspect of it, makes it outstanding in the Germany of the period, is its homogeneity. It is well known that drama is Schlegel's chief interest; if he does not exactly approach the imitation theory through the medium of drama, he yet draws most of his illustrations from the dramatic field. Equally clear, though perhaps not so well known, is the fact that his dramatic theories are but one aspect of his general aesthetic views. Both flow from one single view of art, a view to which he gave expression in his earliest published work. It is just this homogeneity which stands in such marked contrast to Gottsched's ostensibly so much more systematised and in reality so confused and contradictory theorisings. There are to be found in Schlegel none of those inner contradictions which mar the Critische Dichtkunst. The single view of art which he held from the first, gives coherence to the whole. It provides a touchstone for Schlegel himself, guiding him in appreciation, as in theory, while for the reader it supplies that unifying thread which is required to make any theoretical work convincing. Even the lapses - and there are several - from the high standard which Schlegel is capable of reaching, are not fortuitous, but can be accounted for by errors in his original premises; errors partly inherent in the theory of imitation, partly occasioned by the general moral and philosophical outlook of the age. But, whether false or true, his theory is never at odds with itself.

This is the chief impression gained by a close study of his work. And if a more cursory reading fails to reveal it, it is because the various essays form part of no conscious system. This being so, to examine an isolated utterance, or even an individual essay without due regard to its relation to the whole, is fatal to a real understanding of Schlegel's theory. It seems certain that more light can be thrown on the substance of this theory by systematically examining it according to subject matter, rather than by treating the works in chronological order, or by sharply separating the dramatic from the aesthetic theory.

Imitation.

Imitation is as fundamental to Schlegel's theory as to Gottsched's. Art is produced by imitating reality. This principle Schlegel never abandons, nor does he seek to undermine its authority. It is within the framework of this formula, and in terms of it alone, that we must look for signs of a deeper and clearer understanding of art than can be found in the writings of Gottsched and his followers. The theory of imitation, with its idea of translating an object of reality into a plastic medium, is not in itself unfruitful; and it has at different times given rise to widely varying interpretations. It was at that time in Germany, being interpreted in a very unfruitful way. We have to see to what extent Schlegel stretched the theory, without abandoning it in favour of any other; and in what way he had to modify the formula to make it fit the kind of drama he most admired - the tragedies of the Greeks and of Racine.

Recognising that imitation is an ambiguous term, Schlegel finds it desirable to define more closely than does Gottsched, the kind of imitation which results in a work of art. In view of the lack of accepted terminology, he first makes clear exactly what he means by the terms he proposes to use. The word Nachahmung he reserves for the process involved in imitation, preferring Bild to indicate the imitation produced, while Vorbild is the original in nature or reality.¹ Imitation which produces works of art, as distinct from all other processes of imitation, must first of all take place with intent, and with the full consciousness of the imitator. It is never accidental; as Schlegel points out: "es ist nicht alles nachgeahmet, was einer Sache ähnlich ist."² Nor may it be accounted imitation in this sense if nature has had a hand in bringing about the similarity.³

1 Cf. Abhandlung von der Nachahmung (Werke, ed. cit., III, pp. 107, 108; Ant., pp. 106, 107).

2 Ibid., p. 109; Ant., p. 108. Cf., too, p. 124 (Ant., p. 123): "Wo keine Absicht ist, etwas ähnliches hervorzubringen, da ist auch keine Nachahmung."

3 Ibid., ~~(Werke)~~, p. 121; Ant., p. 120.

Purpose is then the mark of this kind of imitation. But this is not yet enough. It has to be distinguished from two other kinds of purposive imitation; that which sets out to instruct and that which intends to deceive. The imitation which gives rise to art does neither of these things. It must have as its aim the communication of pleasure to others. In questions of art, the eighteenth century has always to a certain extent the recipient in view,¹ and Schlegel no less than any other writer. Indeed he goes so far as to say that a work of art is a dead thing unless it is appreciated by someone and but a poor reward for the trouble taken by its creator.² Imitation is not undertaken for its own sake. Otherwise we have to postulate an exact copy or duplicate as the highest form of imitation; or in Schlegel's words: "so ist derjenige im Nachahmen der allervollkommenste, welcher sein Vorbild nicht abschildert, sondern von neuem erschafft."³ It is doubtful whether any theory which sees the creation of a work of art as the imitating of some original in reality can ever dispense with a purpose outside and beyond that of merely producing an imitation. However that may be, Schlegel, at least, makes the giving of pleasure an integral part of his definition, and it is the relation of the recipient to the work of art which is, throughout, the chief object of his attention. That other equation, the relation of the artist to his subject, is almost completely ignored.

Imitation in this particular sense, as a conscious process undertaken in order to give pleasure to others, Schlegel accepts as a basis of all the arts - but with reservations of a very far

- 1 This interest in the recipient continues to the end of the century. How to ensure that the reaction of the public will be the desired one is a frequent subject of discussion between Goethe and Schiller.
- 2 Abhandlung von der Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, p. 170; Ant., p. 99). Cf. a letter from Schlegel to Gottsched, 2 April, 1744 (Seeliger, ed. cit., letter no. 6), in which he expresses the wish to see his play Herrmann fulfilling the purpose for which it was written: "nemlich auf den Schauplatz zu treten." In his next letter (Seeliger, 7) he writes: "Da wir hier in Coppenhagen keine Schaubühne haben, so habe ich niemals so wenig für das Theater gearbeitet, als itzo."
- 3 Von der Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, p. 170; Ant., p. 99).

reaching kind. Not content with merely defining the term more closely, he submits the scope of the principle itself to a penetrating scrutiny. Every theory of imitation, however naturalistic its interpretation, must leave some sort of loophole for the creative talent, for the shaping hand of the artist. In some way it must account for the discrepancy between the reality imitated and the finished work of art. Gottsched, as we saw, ostensibly advocated an exact imitation of reality and never, in so many words, qualified this at all. But by choosing as his model a highly-stylised drama, and by acclaiming the authority of rules and traditional conventions, without ever attempting to reconcile these with his principle of strict imitation, he did, in fact, provide a loophole, as it were by accident. Moreover, by restricting the kind of reality which may be imitated to "schöne Natur", Gottsched retreated still further from a position of complete naturalism. Nowhere in the formulation of his theory, however, is there any modification of the principle, and wherever it was easy of application, he hastened to stress it.

Schlegel, on the other hand, is not content to leave unaccounted for the many differences between art and reality - differences both of quality and quantity. He knows of these differences from experience, and refuses to pass over them tacitly in his theory. He points out that his contemporaries are always governed by such differences in practice, however they may ignore them in theory - in his words, they observe unwittingly a certain law of imitation,¹ and he proposes to focus attention on this law and to try to understand it.

Unlike Gottsched, he is convinced that the difference between art and reality does not lie in the choice of subject. It is in this respect that his theory differs so markedly from that of Batteux,² which, although it appeared slightly later than Schlegel's, yet had a far greater influence. Schlegel recognises that the special kind of pleasure aroused by a work of art is not dependent on the subject chosen.³ The squeamishness of the age,

1 Von der Unähnlichkeit, (Werke, III, p. 168; Ant., p. 97).

2 C. Batteux, Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe, Paris, 1746.

3 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 76; Ant., p. 12): "Dinge, welche auch an sich selbst keine Aehnlichkeit der Verbindung haben, können dadurch Vergnügen erwecken, wenn sie nachgeahmet werden." Cf. Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 128; Ant., p. 127). In the latter passage he supports his argument by a reference to Aristotle (Poetics XXI).

which in itself occasioned a certain limitation of the choice of subject, more than once called from him a protest. Even ugliness can be a subject for art and, as Schlegel points out, "man kann sie nicht hinweglassen, ohne den Menschen die lebhaftesten Vorstellungen zu rauben."¹ Whether such an original becomes a work of art, whether it finally gives pleasure, depends on the treatment. And it is herein, in treatment and not in choice of subject, that Schlegel seeks the solution of his problem.

Being a child of his age, he is not content with observations of an empirical kind, but feels the need of accounting for his views philosophically. He has to account for differences within a general similarity. This he achieves by a carefully drawn distinction between similarity and the highest degree of similarity, or complete identity. The latter would be obtained by imitating any object or event of reality in respect of all its qualities. Similarity, however, can be obtained by imitating in respect of one quality alone. In the case of a head in stone, imitation takes place only in respect of shape; colour, the relative hardness and softness of the different parts of the face, are ignored. Dissimilarity only ensues when wrong proportions are introduced, not when certain resemblances are omitted. A bust does not offend us, although the rest of the body is missing. But if an artist were to paint feet on it, leaving out the other parts, we should be painfully aware of the dissimilarity.² It is because of this distinction between similarity and the highest degree of it, that various imitations of one original are possible: "Eben daher kömmt es, dass auch in der Dichtkunst Beschreibungen einer einzigen Sache ganz verschieden und dennoch auch vollständig seyn können, weil nemlich ein ieder die Theile derselben in Absicht auf eine andre Beschaffenheit betrachtet."³ In this way

1 Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, pp. 169, 174; Ant., pp. 98, 103). Cf. my article, loc. cit. pp. 400 - 403.

2 Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 115 - 117; Ant., pp. 113-116).

3 Ibid., (Werke, III, p. 115; Ant., p. 114).

Schlegel accounts for the differing treatment of the same character in drama, giving the example of Electra as portrayed by Sophocles, Euripides and Aeschylus.¹

The highest degree of similarity would be achieved if imitation and original were identical, or apparently so. For this to be possible, the medium would have to be the same in both cases. But the similarity must be brought about by the artist and not by nature. If a golden vessel, instead of being painted on canvas, is copied in gold, the result will be a replica, complete similarity, but not a work of art. A large proportion of the similarity, that of medium, is not due to the craftsman at all. Imitation, then, can never extend to medium. With this statement, Schlegel at once accounts for many of the differences between art and reality. Many others are accounted for by his claim that similarity is not an end in itself, but only a means to the further end of communicating pleasure. In this way, he distinguishes the highest degree of similarity from the highest degree of imitation.²

Thus Schlegel attempts to justify philosophically his modification of the principle of imitation. But it is not here that his originality appears so unmistakeably. The rigid dialectic obscures the full significance of his ideas, and it is rather in observations and examples which have their origin in experience, that we find him most suggestive and fruitful. Reliance on his own feeling and experience distinguishes him from most of his contemporaries; and it is clear, both from the order in which his works were written and from the evidence of his own words, that it was only after close observation of works of art, and of the difference between them and the reality they portray, that he subjected the matter to philosophical treatment.

Chief of these differences he saw to be that of medium. His interest in it had a practical origin. He was led to treat the problem by an attack on a form of drama for which he had a personal

1 Ibid., pp. 148, 149; Ant., pp. 147, 148.

2 Ibid., pp. 121 - 125; Ant., pp. 120 - 124.

preference and which he felt should not be excluded from the new programme of German literature on a priori grounds. This was the attack by G.B. Straube on comedy in verse, already referred to. The motives which prompted Straube to write the article were, as J.H. Schlegel points out, excellent: "Ein ganz gerechter Unwille über die sklavische Nachahmungssucht, die so lange in Deutschland geherrscht und über die elenden, gereimten Übersetzungen, die damals zur Plage gelehrter und ungelehrter Zuschauer aufs Leipziger Theater gebracht wurden, scheint seine Feder geführt zu haben. Aber die Ausdehnung, die er seinem Satze giebt, und die Gründe, aus welchen er ihn behauptet, sind tadelnswerth."¹ For, although from the title of his article it would appear that Straube intended to confine himself to rhymed comedy, in reality he made no such distinction but used the words rhyme and verse interchangeably. He argued that it was improbable that ordinary people should speak in verse, or that a character newly arrived on the stage should be able to find a suitable rhyme to a word he has not heard. This thoroughly Gottschedian argument is reminiscent of the kind of thinking which prompted the criticism of Besser's Klagegedicht.² Schlegel doubtless felt that such reasoning would not stop at the use of verse in comedy. Nor was he wrong in this assumption. For, although Straube himself defended verse for tragedy, criticism of it was advanced by M. Richter in a later number of the Beyträge.³

Schlegel based his defence on the fact that each art has a medium. This is the material which the artist uses. In this material, he tries to reproduce some aspect of reality. Verse is a medium which the dramatic poet may choose if he wish. The argument that people do not in reality speak in rhyme or in verse, and should not therefore do so in comedy, is no more valid than

1 Werke, III, p. 67.

2 Cf. above, p. 60.

3 M. Richter, Zufällige Gedanken von dem Verse und Reime des Trauerspiels, C.B., 31, 1743. Antoniewicz (p. LVI) unaccountably detects traces of Schlegel's influence in this essay. It is true that Richter does suggest that the demand for probability is carried too far, and that imitation is not intended to be nature. But his tone when he speaks of art is deprecatory; it is, for him, but a poor imitation of nature. In the spirit of what he says he is totally unlike Schlegel.

the claim that, because people in reality have colouring, they should not therefore be without it when portrayed in marble by the sculptor. The only valid line of attack would be to stress the technical difficulty of achieving a pleasing naturalness at the same time as harmonious verse; but to admit such a technical difficulty is to admit a difficulty of poetry in general, not of dramatic poetry alone. In his view, manipulation of the medium until it corresponds as nearly as possible to the original conception, is the artist's task.¹

It is significant that Schlegel completely ignores as a possible line of defence Straube's admission that people have been known to speak in verse. To use this argument, is immediately to introduce non-aesthetic standards. And it is just this which Schlegel was concerned to avoid. Dealing with the accusation that the first word of a rhyme is often spoken before the character who is to complete the couplet appears on the stage, he says: "Ich darf nur wiederholen, was ich schon gesaget habe, dass man gar nicht nöthig hat, die Wahrscheinlichkeit in dem Klange der Verse zu suchen, als in der Materie worinnen sich der Poet vorgesetzt hat, die Natur nachzuahmen. Die Wahrscheinlichkeit der Worte besteht in ihrer Uebereinstimmung mit dem Gedanken: nicht aber in dem äusserlichen Verhältnis des Klanges der Worte gegen einander selbst."² It is impossible then to ask whether a medium is "probable", as is at once clear if we put the question in respect of any other medium than language.

- 1 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, pp. 75, 87; Ant., pp. 11, 23). Cf. Vorrede zu Der Ruhmredige: "Diejenigen kennen also die Natur der Poesie besser, welche die Comödie in Versen aus dem Grunde angreifen, dass es allzuschwer, ja gar unmöglich sey, die dialogische Art, zu reden, mit dem Zwange des Sylbenmasses zu verbinden, ohne sie undialogisch zu machen;..... Auf den Beweis und auf die Widerlegung dieses Grundes kommt entweder die Verdammung oder die Lossprechung der Comödie in Versen an" (Ant., pp. 164, 165). In this respect, it is interesting to note that Schlegel found it difficult himself. In a letter to Bodmer, 15 April, 1747 (Ständlin, ed. cit., p. 49) he says: "Ich finde allezeit, dass mich die erste Hitze der Einbildungskraft zu Nachlässigkeiten verleitet, die ich hernach nur mit vieler Mühe verbessern kann."
- 2 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 87; Ant., p. 23). Cf. too, Ant., p. 16: "Alle Worte in der Comödie können die grösste Wahrscheinlichkeit haben, in dem die Wahrscheinlichkeit derselben nicht in ihrem Verhältnis unter einander selbst, sondern in ihrer Uebereinstimmung mit dem Gedanken, und in der Wahrscheinlichkeit der Dinge, die sie ausdrücken sollen, zu suchen ist."

It might be objected that, by insisting that the poet's medium is verse, Schlegel was undoing the good work begun by Gottsched when he shifted the emphasis from mere versification to the content of poetry. But this would be to misunderstand Schlegel's intention. In his discussion of medium two things prevent him from leaving his forceful and entirely convincing main argument to stand or fall on its own merits, and make him wish to buttress it up with any others he can think of. The first is his unmistakeable love of verse and a strong preference for it in drama. The medium of a work of art can in itself afford pleasure other than that arising out of appreciation of the work as a whole. But this nevertheless remains a question of individual taste and, as such, does not admit of argument. In Schlegel's case, however, the preference leads him to advocate verse on grounds not strictly in accordance with his main thesis. Not content, for instance, with pointing out that verse is the poet's medium, and thereby providing ample justification for its use in comedy, he goes on to urge that it is an added perfection.¹ Unless this be interpreted as an assertion that there is an essential beauty in verse which, in his opinion, makes it superior to prose, the passage indicates a lapse from his otherwise clear conception of medium.

The second thing which tends to lead Schlegel astray, is the polemical nature of his theoretical writings. They are designed to combat that kind of criticism which condemns works of art on grounds of insufficient naturalism. In the reply to Straube in particular, Schlegel has an axe to grind, and this leads him to pile up his arguments in a way which obscures the force of his admirable main thesis. So desirous is he of ensuring that comedy in verse shall not be completely ousted, that he is led to assert that the name of poet rightly belongs only to him who writes in verse, and to demand another name for the kindred artist whose medium is prose.² But this is assuredly not because he wishes to uphold the metrical aspect of poetry at the expense of the content. Schlegel would

1 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 80; Ant., p. 16).

2 The suggestion is, however, made tentatively. Cf. Werke, III, pp. 75, 76; Ant., pp. 11, 12 and also p. 121; Ant., p. 120. Schlegel would presumably have liked some such distinction as poet and literary artist. It is interesting to note a somewhat similar suggestion by Goethe in a letter to Schiller, 25 November, 1797: "Alles Poetische sollte rhythmisch behandelt werden! Das ist meine Überzeugung und, dass man nach und nach eine poetische Prosa einführen konnte, zeigt nur, dass man den Unterschied zwischen Prosa und Poesie gänglich aus den Augen verlor..... Alle dramatischen Arbeiten (und vielleicht Lustspiel und Farce zuerst) sollten rhythmisch sein....."

have been the first to deny that the essence of poetry lies in mere versification,¹ and he expressly pays tribute to Gottsched for having shewn that the beauty of poetry is to be sought, not in externals, but in the thought.² The point he really wishes to make is, that the poet has no need to justify himself if he choose to write comedy in verse; for verse is then his medium in the same way that paint and canvas are the medium of the painter. The shortcomings of Schlegel's essay must not be allowed to overshadow its real significance. His aim is not so much to defend verse as the only desirable medium for comedy, as to put medium in general beyond the range of attack on grounds of probability.³

In the Schreiben über die Comödie in Versen Schlegel used the word "Materie" to denote medium. The choice of the word is a singularly happy one, drawing attention, as it does, to the plastic nature of the artist's medium, and it is regrettable that he should have abandoned it later in favour of the abstract and less vivid word "Subject". Neither term seems to have been used in this sense by his contemporaries.⁴ "Moyen" is the word used by the French writers of the Académie to denote the artist's medium, and this Gottsched rendered by "Mittel". "Materie" in this period usually signifies content or subject matter; it appears

- 1 Cf. letter to Bodmer, 15 April, 1747 (Ständlin, ed. cit., p. 51): "Was die Reime betrifft, so ist niemand, welcher mehr wünschte als ich, dass man das Wesen eines Verses nicht in diesem Klange suchte: Gleichwohl finde ich, dass ich noch immer Ursache habe, dasjenige davon zu glauben, was ich in meiner Abhandlung für die gereimte Comödie.....davon gesagt habe."
- 2 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 86; Ant., p. 22).
- 3 The contention of Wolff (ed. cit., p. 35) that the essay is a defence of poetry in general disregards the fact that Straube was not attacking poetry - a pupil of Gottsched would be unlikely to do that - but verse as a medium for comedy. Schlegel uses the argument that technical difficulties of scansion and rhyme are difficulties of poetry in general, only to lay bare the weak points of his opponent's case. Schlegel's essay is not a defence of poetry, but a contribution to a better understanding of poetry.
- 4 For a similar use of the term "Materie" by Mendelssohn, see below, p. 182.

in this sense, for instance, in Breitinger's Critische Dichtkunst. Whether that vision of the artist, handling and shaping a plastic substance, which the word "Materie" immediately calls up, stimulated in Schlegel fruitful and suggestive trains of thought, must remain a matter for conjecture. But that he has a surprisingly clear understanding of medium is certain and, unlike Gottsched, he is able to avoid confusing the medium of imitation with the manner of it.¹ Because of this, he is aware that there are limits beyond which the criteria of ordinary probability may not be applied.

The artist is bound by his medium to a very great extent, and he cannot be blamed for not imitating reality more closely than his medium will allow. Some media admit of closer similarity than others, for they may possess many of the qualities of the original, or few. But imitation of one and the same original can be as perfect in a medium which does not admit of great similarity, as in one that does. Nor is an artist bound to choose a medium which admits of the greatest possible similarity with the original which he has decided to imitate. He is absolutely free to choose whichever medium he wishes.² In the art of painting, for instance, a picture actually comes nearest to the original when colour is included as well as the similarities of form, light and shade. But whether to give this maximum amount of likeness is for the artist to decide: "Selbst unter diesen setzen sich einige vor, die Bilder mit eben den Farben darzustellen, darinnen man die Sachen selbst erblicket; andre begnügen sich nur Licht und Schatten zu bezeichnen. Und man kann darum nicht sagen, dass einer von ihnen unrecht handle."³ Schlegel points out that the choice of medium will depend on the artist's talent and inclination. He nevertheless realises the unsuitability of certain subjects for certain media, and protests against attempts to represent visual images in music.⁴

Without entering into a general argument on the thorny question of opera, Schlegel claims for the composer the right to let his heroes sing.⁵ The parallel between opera and comedy in verse is drawn in the preface to the translation of Destouches'

1 See above, p.24

2 Cf. Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 121 - 126; Ant., pp. 119 - 125). Cf. also Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 75; Ant., p. 11).

3 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 74; Ant., p. 10).

4 Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 119, 120 & 124, 125; Ant., pp. 118, 119 & 123, 124).

5 Ibid., p. 125; Ant., p. 124.

Le Glorieux, where Schlegel reiterates the principle that a medium, in itself, is neither probable nor improbable, and makes it unmistakably clear that it was never merely verse he was defending but the inviolability of any medium. Once the "probability" of this is questioned, he says, it is but a step to the condemnation of all the arts.¹

Schlegel noticed other differences between art and reality apart from that of medium. In order to refute Straube's argument, he lists other things in drama which, judged by external standards, are as improbable as the use of verse: "Ist es nicht zum Exempel eben so unwahrscheinlich, dass eine einzige Handlung, ohne durch andere Handlungen, welche im gemeinen Leben so oft unsere Geschäfte unterbrechen, gestört zu werden, an einem einzigen Orte geschieht; dass alle Personen zu eben der Zeit und nach eben den Worten, da wir sie haben wollen, auftreten, welches alles, wenn wir von der äusserlichen Möglichkeit reden wollen, ganz und gar unmöglich ist."² And he demands whether it is not unlikely that all characters of whatever class, should speak with an equal degree of correctness, as in many dramas they do.

1 Vorrede zu Der Ruhmredige (Ant., pp. 163, 164).

2 Von der Comödie (Werke, III, p. 75; Ant., p. 11). It is surprising that Antoniewicz, with his intimate knowledge of Schlegel's theoretical writings, should interpret this passage in a way so completely alien to the general trend of Schlegel's thought; e.g. (p. XI): "So erklärt Schlegel gleich in seinem ersten Aufsätze.....die Einheit des Ortes als etwas Zufälliges und Nebensächliches," and (p. CLXXII): "Was seine Ansichten von der Einheit des Ortes und der Zeit anbetrifft, so hat er ja bereits im Schreiben über die Comödie in Versen die erstere als einen Verstoss gegen die Wahrscheinlichkeit bezeichnet." But note Schlegel's significant qualification above: "wenn wir von der äusserlichen Möglichkeit reden wollen." Unity of place is only improbable if we choose to think in terms of external probability. It confuses the whole argument to assume that, in an essay in which he defends the poetic form of drama against accusations of improbability, he should make a sudden volte-face and attack other aspects of form on grounds which he had shewn should not be applied to art. Neither here nor elsewhere does Schlegel reject unity of place on grounds of improbability, and Antoniewicz, like many others, is led astray in his interpretation of Schlegel's aesthetics by his determination to prove him a pioneer in the dramatic field.

Some of the things mentioned - unity of place, for instance - are conventions of one particular form of drama. But when Schlegel speaks of characters arriving on the stage at exactly the right moment, and saying just the appropriate thing, he is referring to a convention of all drama, one inherent in the form of it. He is touching on that control which the dramatist assumes over persons and events, and which he must assume, if he is to impart to his work a significance not apparent in the persons and events of reality. This control permits the dramatist to eliminate everything irrelevant, to select. In the essay on comedy in verse Schlegel observed the way in which medium sometimes operates in a selective manner. The medium of the sculptor eliminates all aspects of the original except the shape.¹ In the Abhandlung von der Nachahmung he takes a passage from Günther, and shews how the poet selects, leaving out all that is not relevant to his purpose.² But it is in drama, that this selectivity strikes him particularly. Drama, he says, "sondert eine Sache von den Nebenumständen ab, mit denen das Original vermischt ist."³ This selection throws into relief, heightens and intensifies: "Es (the theatre) ist wie eine Schilderey, oder ein Riss, der manchmal uns Begriffe von den Dingen macht, die wir nicht gesehen haben, und manchmal uns die Dinge in grösserer Deutlichkeit zeigt, als wir sie in der Natur erblicken können."³ Characters, especially, are, in reality, often obscured by many things. In drama, however, the poet has sifted the significant from the less significant, and thus focussed a light upon the character which reveals the true nature of it.⁴ Often, too, he exaggerates to achieve his purpose: "So oft wir einen Geizigen, einen Heuchler, eine Widersprecherinn abschildern; so oft pflegen wir gleichsam einen Herkules zu bilden, in welchen wir, wie die Griechen diesem die Thaten aller Helden beylegten, die Thaten aller Geizigen, aller Heuchler, aller Widersprecherinnen zusammenbringen."⁵ Schlegel doubtless had in

1 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 79; Ant., p. 15).

2 Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 117, 118; Ant., pp. 116, 117).

3 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 272; Ant., p. 203).

4 Ibid., Cf. too p. 290; Ant., p. 219.

5 Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, p. 173; Ant., pp. 101, 102).

mind, when he wrote this, the typical character of French classical comedy; but the remark which follows the above - "niemals hat die Natur weder die Fehler noch die Tugenden der Menschen so vollkommen hervorgebracht, als die Nachahmung" - is nevertheless true of every kind of dramatic character.

It is unfortunate that, in protesting against attacks on the necessary exaggeration of character, Schlegel should have allowed himself at one point to depart from the strictly aesthetic position he had hitherto occupied. With the comment: "man kann ein ziemliches Zutrauen zu der Grösse der menschlichen Thorheit haben" he goes to the sphere of practical reality for the arguments to defend something which is of the very essence of drama. Almost immediately, however, he recovers the aesthetic point of view by pointing out that the concentrated action of drama necessarily reveals character in a way that the desultory events of reality do not.¹ This lapse nevertheless shews that Schlegel's perception and taste are in advance of his thought.

This is particularly noticeable in his attempt to account for the way in which the characters of tragedy behave when under stress of emotion. They frequently lack the brevity which probability and naturalism might demand. An article by Mylius on the place of metaphor in tragedy shews clearly enough the kind of criticism which Schlegel felt bound to refute.² A poet must imitate nature, says Mylius: "die Natur nenne ich hier alles dasjenige, was in der Welt ist und ordentlicher Weise darinnen vorzugehen pflegt."³ Similes and the like in tragedy

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 290; Ant., p. 219).

2 Christlob Mylius, Critische Untersuchung, ob und in wie fern die Gleichnisse in den Trauerspielen statt finden (C.B., 1743, pp. 394 ff.). It is probable that Schlegel's desire to refute general criticism of this kind was strengthened by motives of a personal nature. Gottsched had criticised his Herrmann for its Orakeln and Sittensprüche (Vorrede, Schaubühne, V).

3 Op. Cit., pp. 396, 397 and 419, 420.

are, however, not compatible with this. "Mich dünckt," Mylius continues, "die Dichter, welchen es um die Nachahmung der Natur zu thun ist, sind alle hierinn einstimmig, dass sich da die Stärke des Witzes nicht zeigen kann, wo heftige Gemüths-bewegungen reden," and he concludes: "Hieraus erhellet denn, dass man, um den letzten Zweck der Poesie, nämlich die Aehnlichkeit mit der Natur, als den Grund des wahren Vergnügens in der Poesie, zu erreichen, manchen poetischen Zierrath weglassen muss."¹

Schlegel was far from advocating the introduction of figures of speech for their own sake. In the essay Von der Würde und Majestät des Ausdrucks im Trauerspiele, he anticipates criticism of this kind and answers it as follows: "Ein Gedanke mag so schön seyn, als er will; so ist er wider die Majestät des Trauerspieles, so bald er an einem Orte stehet, wo er denjenigen Endzweck, von welchem die Frage ist, nicht befördern hilft."² On the other hand, he feels that the standards of actuality are not the ones to apply. The reactions of ordinary people under stress of great emotion, the repeated exclamation, the stammered, broken phrase and nothing more, are unthinkable for tragedy, except in extreme cases when the understanding is stunned or exhausted.³ The great works of the Greeks and of Racine are proof enough for him that he is right: "Wer hat z.E. jemals einen grossen Herrn beständig auf die Art reden hören, wie ein König oder Held in dem Trauerspiele spricht. Wollte man deswegen sagen, dass Racine unnatürlich wäre, wenn er keine Periode sagt, darinnen nicht ein schöner Gedanken steckt?"⁴ He is convinced that noble speeches and an intellectual awareness, even at the height of passion, are desirable for tragedy. But he is hard put to it to explain why. He falls back on non-aesthetic reasoning, and argues on the same plane as Mylius, only in the reverse direction, urging that it is false to assume that strong emotion inhibits thought; it merely renders us oblivious of issues unconnected with the emotion and its causes.⁵ He points out

1 Op. cit., pp. 396, 397 and 419, 420.

2 Würde und Majestät (Werke, III, p. 237; Ant., p. 188).

3 Ibid., p. 236; Ant., pp. 186, 187.

4 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 146; Ant., p. 145).

5 Würde und Majestät (Werke, III, pp. 235, 236; Ant., p. 186).

that the

"Ah! n'ai-je eu de l'amour que pour t'assassiner! " of Racine's Atalide when she hears of the death of Bajazet, is more forceful than any number of O!, Ach! or similar ejaculations.¹ From his experience of tragedy, Schlegel had noted that tragic characters possess a much greater awareness of their own emotions than ordinary men. From this he reasoned, not that this greater awareness is a feature of the art-form, tragedy, but that it is characteristic of a noble and well-trained mind;² that is, of something that exists in the world of actuality or, at least, that is popularly imagined to exist.³ He thus departs from his clear perception that art is not nature and does not pretend to be. But it is noteworthy that he is at least aware of a problem. He is clearly concerned with that heightened consciousness, that more than normal awareness, the self-explanatory tendency of the characters in tragedy. And although he fails in his attempt to account for it, his feeling is right. For, instead of rejecting this feature of tragedy on grounds of incomplete naturalism, he does his best to defend it.

In general, apart from these two exceptions, we may say that Schlegel is unwilling to apply criteria of probability to form. This does not imply, as one might expect, that he had an unusually narrow view of form, that he refused to accept any but the most orthodox kind of drama. His attitude towards form is, from the first, more elastic than that of Gottsched, despite the fact that the kind of criticism used by the latter would, if pursued to its logical conclusions, destroy form altogether. As early as the Shakespeare essay (1740), Schlegel is able to penetrate what was to him an unfamiliar and unorthodox form, and to appreciate dramatic vitality.⁴ And, with increasing knowledge of English drama, he finally comes to accept the most widely differing forms. Nor does his defence of certain conventions imply a blind acceptance of all conventions. It is often necessary to submit certain conventions

1 Würde und Majestät (Werke, III, pp. 235, 236; Ant., p. 186).

2 Ibid., p. 219; Ant., p. 171.

3 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 146; Ant., p. 145).

4 Cf. especially the end of that essay (Werke, III, p. 64; Ant., p. 95).

to critical examination, and to reject them when they are outworn. As we shall see, Schlegel does not fail to do this. But it is also true that indiscriminate criticism can make even the most sublime art appear ridiculous; and in matters of form, he is not content to join those critics who irresponsibly bandied the catchwords "Natürlichkeit" and "Wahrscheinlichkeit".

This is particularly clear when he deals with the exclusion of the comic from tragedy. In the comparison of Shakespeare and Gryphius he says: "Es kann seyn, dass verschiedenes darinnen ganz natürlich ist, aber ein Poet, der Trauerspiele schreibt, thut es, um in seinen Zuschauern edle Regungen und Leidenschaften, vermittelt der Nachahmung zu erwecken; und alles, was dieses hindert, ist ein Fehler, es mag gut nachgeahmet seyn, als es will."¹ It must be remembered that Schlegel's view of the effect of tragedy was conditioned by the works he knew best. In the tragedies of the Greeks, of Corneille and Racine, the effect is a cumulative one, not one that is heightened by contrast. This effect then, which, in his view, is the aim of tragedy, determines the form, with its exclusion of anything which militates against the total impression. Such a view admittedly narrows the field of tragedy; but it is not in itself without aesthetic validity. It is at least a more reasonable view than that which, in order to exclude the comic from tragedy, merely appeals to tradition. For, to defend a form, not for its own sake, but for the sake of the effect it produces, means that, as he experiences the effect of other kinds of tragedy, he is open to modify his views about the form. It is only the forms of art that Schlegel wishes to safeguard from those who clamour for "probability". As regards characters, emotions, action, he is, as we shall see later, insistent in his demand for probability and naturalness. And although he does not allow questions of this kind to be asked in respect of verse as a medium, yet as regards the meaning of the words within the verse and their relation to each other, such questions have every right to be asked. Meaning and natural order must never yield place to mere pleasantness of sound. Schlegel is uncompromising about this.² He admits that it involves much polishing and trimming, but, as a result, "unsere

1 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 60; Ant., pp. 92, 93).

2 Cf. especially Über die Comödie (Werke, III, pp. 80, 81 and 87 - 90; Ant., pp. 16, 17 and 23 - 26).

Gedanken werden ausgeputzter und unser Ausdruck, wo es erfordert wird, zierlicher und lebhafter." While the work of art is, in fact, unlike nature by virtue of its different medium, its effect may be stronger than that of nature itself; for, "alle Einfälle bekommen, wenn mit der natürlichen Artigkeit derselben noch die Harmonie des Sylbenmasses verknüpft ist, einen bessern Nachdruck und eine viel empfindlichere Annehmlichkeit."

It is thus by no means always the difference between art and reality which Schlegel stresses. After all, the basis of art, for him, is the imitation of nature; he modifies the scope of it but never rejects the principle. In the Abhandlung von der Nachahmung he urges, therefore, that the best imitation comes as near to the original as the nature of the medium will allow. Furthermore, any confusion or uncertainty on the part of the reader or spectator must be avoided; the imitation must convey "die deutlichsten Begriffe von dem Vorbilde."¹ But, by vindicating the artist's freedom to choose, not only his subject and medium, but the degree of similarity with the original, he releases him from the obligation to imitate reality as closely as possible. The importance Schlegel attaches to this freedom is shewn by his repeated reference to it; in the essay on comedy in verse twice: "Sie müssen mir also zugeben, dass man bey allen Nachahmungen der Natur bestimmen kann, auf welche Art und wie weit man sie nachahmen will;" and on the next page: "es ist genug, wenn ich erwiesen habe, dass es erlaubt sey, wenn man die Natur nachahmet, die Art und Materie zu stimmen, wie man sie nachahmen will."² And in the Abhandlung von der Nachahmung he formulates the principle in the following way: "Also ist es auch willkürlich, den Grad, sowohl als das Subject der Nachahmung und das Vorbild selbst zu wählen."³ Thus the tendency of art away from nature, as well as towards it, is realised. And the sole criterion of the artist's success is the effect on the recipient. For the aim of art is not complete similarity to nature but the communication of pleasure, which is effected in the highest degree when the imitation is perfect. This perfection is only achieved when the imitation neither fails to reach, nor yet exceeds, its proper degree of similarity to nature.⁴

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 125 - 127; Ant., pp. 124 - 126).

2 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, pp. 75, 76; Ant., pp. 11, 12).

3 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 124; Ant., p. 123).

4 Ibid.

Pleasure.

Schlegel's insistence on pleasure rather than moral improvement as the purpose of art has been claimed as one of his more important points of advance over Gottsched.¹ Throughout the eighteenth century, however, the aim delectare never completely ousts prodesse, and the sole difference between writers in this respect lies in the amount of emphasis laid on the one or the other. The reason is very simple. Neither line of approach brings us any nearer to a real understanding of the effect of art, or of its place in human life; but belief in its moral value mitigates somewhat the effect of the purely hedonistic view and thus fosters the idea of the nobility of art.

Schlegel is one of those who insist more on pleasure as the purpose of art, but by no means exclusively. In human life generally he thinks, as one might expect, that instruction is more important than pleasure.² This belief almost forces some kind of compromise upon him; for pleasure has, at least in the early eighteenth century, the inevitable association of "mere pleasure", and Schlegel's view of art and its function is an exalted one. He tries to meet the difficulty by including instruction as a subsidiary purpose of art, and by suggesting that the process of being instructed in itself gives a high degree of pleasure. Therefore the best kinds of subjects are those which are instructive.³

Nevertheless he makes a bold stand for pleasure as the chief function of art, basing his views, as he expressly says, on experience.⁴ He is fully conscious that his position differs from

1 Cf. Wolff, ed. cit., p. 81. But Wolff fails to note that for Schlegel, as for all his contemporaries, prodesse is an important, if not the essential, effect of art.

2 "Lehren ist ohne Zweifel eine viel wichtigere Sache als Ergetzen" (Gedanken, Werke, III, p. 271; Ant., p. 202). Cf. Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 136, 137; Ant., pp. 135, 136).

3 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 158; Ant., p. 157).

4 Ibid., p. 135; Ant., p. 134. Cf. Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 83; Ant., p. 19).

that officially accepted in Leipzig; for he says: "Man giebt sonst zum Endzwecke der Dichtkunst zwey Dinge zugleich an, nämlich Vergnügen und Unterrichten.....Wenn wir aber fragen, welches von beyden der Hauptzweck sey; so mögen die strengsten Sittenlehrer sauer sehen, wie sie wollen, ich muss gestehen, dass das Vergnügen dem Unterrichten vorgehe...."¹ Whatever the relative value of pleasure and instruction, art in his view is still art even if it does not instruct. His aim in thus emphasising pleasure is twofold. On the one hand, he wishes to refuse the title of art to works which have instructional value only; and, at the same time, to distinguish in art that by virtue of which it is art, even when it also happens to be instructive. On the other hand, he is concerned to prevent art that is neither instructive nor morally uplifting from being condemned on that account. He claims that "ein Dichter der vergnügt und nicht unterrichtet, als ein Dichter höher zu schätzen sey, als derjenige, der unterrichtet und nicht vergnügt."¹ With the words "als ein Dichter", he draws attention to the necessity of judging poetry in terms of poetry, and not by the standards of any other sphere of human activity. And with the statement: "Ich habe noch niemanden gehört, der den Cato mit seinen Sittensprüchen für einen bessern Poeten gehalten hätte, als den Catullus mit seinen leichtfertigen Einfällen."¹ He registers a protest against the kind of criticism which Gottsched was wont to level against great poets. Schlegel's point of view is most clearly revealed in a remark about drama: "Ein Stück, bey welchem noch so viel Kunst verschwendet und die Kunst zu ergetzen vergessen ist, gehört in die Studierstube und nicht auf den Schauplatz. Ein Stück hingegen, das nur diesem Hauptzwecke Genüge thut, hat ein Recht auch den vernünftigen Leuten bloss aus dieser Ursache zu gefallen."²

But to attach undue importance to Schlegel's insistence on pleasure is to miss the true significance of the stand he takes. Such insistence in itself does not greatly contribute to a better understanding of the function of art; for, although it distinguishes a work of art from a didactic treatise, it yet fails to distinguish it from human achievements in other spheres which also give pleasure.

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 136; Ant., p. 135).

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 270; Ant., p. 202).

The value of Schlegel's claim is that he thereby frees the poet from the obligation to aim at anything other than writing poetry, and demands that, if his work is to merit the name of poetry, it shall do something other than instruct or improve.

With the remark : "Es vergnügt den Verstand des Menschen nichts so sehr als was ihn lehret, zumal ohne dass es ihn zu lehren scheint",¹ Schlegel might seem to be not so far removed from Gottsched's conception of poetry as a sugar-coated pill. But the effect on the individual and on society which he envisages, has little in common with that moral uplift which Gottsched hoped to achieve by coating a moral precept with the sugar of a "Fabel". Indeed Schlegel makes an ironical protest against this very thing. After a direct reference to Gottsched's interpretation of Oedipus, he continues: "Solche Kunstrichter wollten gern einen grossen Theil schöner Schauspiele, in welchen die Sitten und Leidenschaften vortrefflich abgemalt sind, bloss darum verworfen oder umgegossen haben, weil sich nach ihrem Kopfe nicht eine gewisse Hauptlehre aus denselben ziehen lässt; gleich als ob man grosse Theaterstücke mit vieler Kunst deswegen verfertigte, um eine einzige, bekannte, seichte, und oft sehr unbestimmte Sittenlehre zu sagen, die man aus der Comödie eines Seiltanzers ebenfalls herleiten kann."² Here, as elsewhere, Schlegel is concerned to defend against destructive criticism art which he knows to be great.

But of the beneficial effect of literature Schlegel stood in no doubt, even though he thought of it as happening in a very different way. The theatre is an especially suitable vehicle of instruction; for, depicting as it does, characters and passions, it widens and deepens our knowledge of human nature. It is noteworthy that, as far as "prodesse" is concerned, Schlegel does not stress the narrowly moral so much as the intellectual and social aspects. He points out that the value of this aspect of drama has too often been overlooked by critics. The theatre, besides being "eine Schule guter Sitten", mirrors the nation, its way of life, its peculiarities, polishes wit and refines taste. It teaches, not as a pedant, but as a man, "der durch seinen Umgang unterrichtet, und der sich hütet jemals zu erkennen zu geben, dass dieses seine Absicht sey."³ This is true not only of the theatre

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 158; Ant., p. 157).

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 271; Ant., p. 203).

3 Ibid., pp. 272 ff; Ant., pp. 203 ff.

but of literature in general: "Der Geschmack in der Dichtkunst reiniget den Geschmack im Umgange.....wo man schöner sprechen, gesitteter scherzen und von ernsthaften Dingen lebhafter reden lernt."¹ This is no narrowly moral or instructional influence, but that less tangible changing of the texture of life and social intercourse by contact with the world of art.²

Schlegel, then, protests against the relegation of poetry to the position of a servant of morality and mocks at the idea that improvement is brought about by a series of isolated lessons, each wrapped up in a poem, rather than by the cumulative effect of contact with many and varied works of art; but he has, all the same, a high view of the nobility of art and of the far-reaching influence it may have. His insistence on pleasure as its essential function aims at distinguishing the effect arising out of a work of art as such, from any other incidental effects. Nowhere does this appear more clearly than when he makes the penetrating observation that the purpose of the artist is often very different from the purpose of art: "Der Endzweck des Künstlers und der Kunst sind öfters sehr von einander unterschieden. Der Endzweck der Kunst pfleget eine nothwendige Wirkung derselben zu seyn; der Endzweck des Künstlers aber kann oftmals in einer Sache bestehen, die der Kunst ganz zufällig ist, und von dem Künstler mit demselben verbunden wird."³

This "inevitable" effect of art Schlegel examines more closely. He takes it for granted that the experience or, as he terms it, pleasure is familiar to all those who have had

- 1 Von der Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, p. 167; Ant., p. 96).
- 2 Cf. Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 275; Ant., p. 206): "Man kann sagen, dass die Feinigkeit ihres Theaters und die Feinigkeit ihrer Sitten meistens in einem gewissen Verhältniss mit einander gestanden haben, und dass es damit wie mit zweenen Steinen zugegangen, welche beyde einander glatt schleifen."
- 3 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 137; Ant., p. 136). It should be noted that Schlegel never suggests that this association of other purposes with a work of art is in any way illegitimate. Indeed, as he later points out, the theatre is well suited to serve other purposes. But it is necessary to be clear that it is under no compulsion to serve any purpose other than that of presenting drama.

contact with works of art, and he is concerned less with the psychological state than with the way in which it arises. In what way does imitation arouse this feeling of pleasure? How can it best be ensured that it will arise, and that the inevitable result of contemplation will not be interfered with? This seems to imply that Schlegel thought art could be learned; and it is certain both from his writings and from the labour he expended on improving and polishing his own dramas,¹ that he thought much could be learned as regards craftsmanship. But whatever can be learned comes, he thinks, from experience and a right understanding of the nature of art - a very different thing from the crude application of rules advocated by Gottsched. Having always in view the reaction of the spectator or reader, Schlegel assumes that the desired effect can best be achieved by knowing how the pleasure arises: "Ich wundre mich," he says, "wie es Leute giebt, die sich bemühen, dieses Vergnügen hervorzu- bringen, und dennoch so sorglos sind, zu wissen, wie es entspringt: da ihnen doch diese Wissenschaft, den Weg dazu leichter und sichrer machen könnte!"²

Admiration of the artist's skill is, in Schlegel's view, of only secondary importance as a source of pleasure. The specifically aesthetic pleasure is, he thinks, evoked by a perception of order. Order arises inevitably in imitation even when there is no order in the original itself, just because one thing is held against another. The source of pleasure is, then, the perception of similarity.³

Ignoring for the moment the truth or falsity of this analysis, as also the criticism that it presupposes a purely intellectual reaction to art, let us look at the matter from another angle.

1 Cf., for instance, Gellert's comment: "In seinen Tragödien konnte er ganze Aufzüge umarbeiten, ohne darüber zu klagen." (Gellerts Sämmtliche Schriften, X, Leipzig, 1784, p. 41).

2 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 131; Ant., p. 130).

3 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 130; Ant., p. 129). Cf., too, Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 76; Ant., p. 12).

More than once Schlegel assures us that what he has to say about aesthetic enjoyment can only be based on experience. It seems that his experience taught him that art gives rise to a special kind of satisfaction just by virtue of its being art: "so wird durch die blosse Nachahmung.....sehr viel Vergnügen entstehen."¹ And this satisfaction arising from the work as a whole is distinct from any incidental pleasure which some one aspect of a work may arouse. As we saw, Schlegel distinguished the inevitable effect of a work of art, the satisfaction it gives, from any other effects, ethical or instructive, which the artist may choose to associate with it. In a similar way he wishes to distinguish this satisfaction, which is the effect of art in general, from other kinds of satisfaction which may be due to the subject (theme) or to the medium of any particular work. Hence his frequently reiterated claim that the effect of aesthetic contemplation follows inevitably and is of the very essence of art. He speaks of the pleasure, "das aus dem Wesen einer Sache fließt;"² and again: "Sie (die Nachahmung) bringt es nicht zufälliger Weise hervor, sondern ihrem Wesen nach und allezeit nothwendig;" finally: "Dieses ist dasjenige Vergnügen, welches aus dem Wesen der Nachahmung entsteht. Ich läugne dadurch nicht, dass es nicht auch vielerley andres Vergnügen geben könne, das die Nachahmung erwecket. Ich will aber itzt nur von demjenigen Vergnügen reden.....welches allein nothwendig daraus folget, wenn die Nachahmung wahrgenommen wird und nicht von zufälligen Dingen derselben herkömmt."³ Clearly, then, Schlegel recognises the existence of a specifically aesthetic experience, and whether his analysis of the psychological nature of this experience be right or wrong, he does at least succeed in isolating the experience and in distinguishing it from others with which it might be, and often was, confused.

To ensure that a work of art shall give rise to this particular kind of experience, that it shall not be interfered with or wholly ruined, it is often necessary to make significant departures from the original. An aesthetic experience is not possible when the theme itself calls forth excessively strong

1 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 77; Ant., p. 13).

2 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 136; Ant., p. 134).

3 Ibid., pp. 131, 132; Ant., pp. 129 - 131.

reactions; or, to use Schlegel's own words, order is not perceived when something seizes more violently on the imagination.¹ The absence of the desired experience may be due to various causes. The fault may lie with the reader or spectator. As an example of this Schlegel imagines a man who visits a picture gallery when he is worried or unhappy, and says that it is not surprising if he does not even see the pictures, let alone appreciate them in the right way. In such a case, however, as Schlegel himself admits, it is unlikely that contemplation takes place at all. And the more interesting type of case in which, because of the peculiar relation of the recipient to the subject or theme, the work as a whole fails to appeal to the artistic emotions and speaks directly to the human or personal emotions, receives scant attention. He refers only to that lack of preparedness for the peculiar appeal of art which is usual in children;² and to the predisposition which is necessary for witnessing tragedy, one's first experience of which may well prove unpleasant.³ Not primarily interested in the psychological aspect, he dismisses this as being outside the control of the artist: "Für diejenigen Empfindungen, die öfters ganz wo anders als aus der Nachahmung und dem Bilde welches vergnügen soll, herkommen und den Geist von der Betrachtung des Bildes anders wohin lenken, kann die Nachahmung nicht stehen; und er (sic) muss solche als Zufälle des Glücks betrachten, welche ohne dass er sie voraus sehen oder ändern können (sic) seinen Endzweck zerstören."⁴ But interference with the aesthetic experience may be due, not to the attitude of the recipient, but to faults in the work of art. With these Schlegel is more concerned: "ein jeglicher, der da nachahmet, würde wider seinen Endzweck handeln, wenn er durch seine Bilder selbst zu so heftigen Empfindungen Anlass gäbe, dass das Gefühl von der Schönheit der Nachahmung dadurch entweder geschwächt oder ganz und gar unterdrückt würde."⁵ The artist must consider how strong an impression the subject of his work is likely to make, and find ways and means of ensuring that the appeal it finally makes is an artistic one. In order to

1 Ibid., pp. 153, 154; Ant., pp. 152, 153.

2 Ibid., p. 135; Ant., pp. 133, 134.

3 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 267; Ant., p. 199).

4 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 154; Ant., p. 153).

5 Ibid.

ensure this, he may, if necessary he must, admit into his work features which are unlike the original. The method is not always that of omission, for it would often be a pity to reject the subject altogether. If that be so, the artist can, by his treatment, tone down the impression it makes until it no longer obtrudes and disturbs the aesthetic experience: "so verbirgt man dasjenige, was diese ungleichen Empfindungen machen könnte; man schwächt bey der Nachahmung die Kraft desselben und schildert eine Sache lieber weniger lebhaft und weniger natürlich ab, ehe man die ganze Frucht seiner Nachahmung durch eine allzuhochgetriebene Natürlichkeit verlieren sollte."¹ Some of the examples which Schlegel gives are blatantly obvious; but in his remarks on the portrayal of death he reveals a more profound understanding of the nature of art than is shewn by any of his contemporaries. The passage is well-known, but will bear being quoted again: "Ich verlange nicht, dass man unter dem Weinen und Geschrey der Umstehenden, wenn alle seufzen und ausrufen: Ach! er wird blass! ach! er erstarrt! ach! er stirbt! einen armen Sterbenden, welcher itzt die Augen zuthun sollte, mit seinen schwachen Füßen bemühen und vom Schauplatz abtreten lassen solle, damit er nicht vor den Augen der Zuschauer sterbe. Aber man wird wenigstens dasjenige, was bey dem schrecklichen Augenblicke des Todes noch süßes und sanftes wahrgenommen werden kann; ganz gelinde Bewegungen; ein Hauptneigen, welches mehr einen schläfrigen Menschen, als einen, der mit dem Tode kämpft, anzuzeigen scheint; eine Stimme, welche zwar unterbrochen wird, aber nicht röchelt, zu der Vorstellung des Todes brauchen können; kurz, man wird selber eine Art des Todes schaffen müssen, die sich iedermann wünschen möchte, und keiner erhält."²

All Schlegel's examples are of physical things - the portrayal of ugliness, madness, death - and he thus only touches on the fringe of the whole problem. The difficulties which beset the artist who treats topical subjects or those likely to arouse strong prejudice are, as we might expect in a period far removed from anything akin to the problem play, completely ignored. Nevertheless, as far as he goes, Schlegel shews considerable

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 156; Ant., p. 155).

2 Von der Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, pp. 174, 175; Ant., p. 103). Cf. too, a similar passage (Nachahmung, Werke, III, p. 156; Ant., p. 155). Gottsched and his pupils, on the other hand, advocated omission rather than special treatment. Death, for instance, was to take place off-stage.

insight and his views are fully borne out by modern theories.¹

It is doubtful to what extent Schlegel was aware of spatial distance as a factor in appreciation. He remarked in the Gedanken zur Aufnahme eines dänischen Theaters that it is often necessary and desirable to transfer the scene of a play to a foreign land, because this allows the poet greater freedom in the treatment of both character and action.² The source of his observation is in Racine's preface to his Bajazet and it is evident that the greater poet was fully aware of the change which the shifting of the scene might have on the reactions of the spectators.³ Whether Schlegel realised this too can scarcely be determined from the text. But the idea of changing the circumstances of time and place when treating persons or events familiar to the spectator is so much in tune with his suggestion, made years before, for changing the circumstances of the original when portraying death or madness, that one is tempted to assume a connection.

Schlegel is fully aware that certain of the arts can support a greater degree of naturalism than others: "Jegliche Art der Nachahmung hat hierinnen ihre eignen Wirkungen. Einem Maler ist es erlaubt, eklere Sachen zu schildern, als einem Poeten..... Auf epische Art ist es erlaubt schrecklicher nachzuahmen als durch theatralische Vorstellungen."⁴

The changes in the subject which he thus advises the artist to

1 See below, pp.195 ff.

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 286; Ant., pp. 215, 216).

3 Cf. Preface to Bajazet (Racine, Oeuvres, Paris, 1676, Tome II, pp. 66, 67), where the question of distance in time and space is discussed and the example of the Persae cited: "On peut dire que le respect que l'on a pour les Heros augmente a mesure qu'ils s'éloignent de nous. L'éloignement des pays repare on quelque sorte la trop grande proximité des temps." Modern critics, while recognising the importance of this factor, also stress that of psychical distance. Cf. below, p.198.

4 Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 155, 156; Ant., pp. 154, 155). Cf. below, p.198.

make consciously, with a view to obtaining a certain effect, doubtless take place unconsciously in the creative genius, for the very process of artistic creation demands a distanced view of the subject. But Schlegel is merely following the custom of the period when he formulates the results of his observation and experience into a rule to be applied deliberately by the artist: "man soll nämlich zuweilen die Nachahmung der Sache, der man nachahmet, unähnlich machen."¹ He clearly feels this to be a revolutionary statement and anticipates opposition. But he resolutely refuses to compromise and rejects any suggestion that he may perhaps mean less than he says: "Ich will mir alle Ausflüchte verschließen, welche hernach meinem Satze einen anderen Verstand geben könnten, als es anfangs geschienen hat. Dieses ist nicht das einzige, was ich verlange, sondern ich bin überzeugt, dass man die Umstände seines Vorbildes zuweilen anders vorstellen muss, als sie wirklich sind; dass man öfters nur wenige Züge von derjenigen Sache, die man abschildert behalten darf; kurz, dass man oft, wenn man nachahmet, die ganze Sache, der man nachahmet, so zu sagen, verwandeln muss."² Clearly Schlegel, who makes no pretence of any psychological investigation of the poet's temperament or of the creative process, here touches more closely on the nature of artistic creation than do any of his contemporaries. The actor must "create" a death of his own; the artist must "transform" his original. Is it possible within the theory of imitation proper to go further than this? Is the principle not thus stretched to a point beyond which it must break and be cast aside in favour of another?

The significance of Schlegel's analysis of pleasure is then this. He clearly distinguishes the effect arising from a work of art as such from any other incidental effects, moral or instructional, which it may also happen to produce. This effect, which he terms pleasure, he then examines with a view to distinguishing it from any satisfaction produced by the subject as such, or by the medium as such, thus shewing his concern to isolate a specific aesthetic experience. Finally, he insists that, to ensure that this specifically aesthetic experience does result from contemplation of his work, the artist must be prepared to subdue his raw material, his subject or theme, so that it does not give rise to non-aesthetic effects. We must now return to

1 Von der Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, p. 168; Ant., p. 97).

2 Ibid., p. 169; Ant., p. 98.

Schlegel's account of the way in which aesthetic pleasure arises.

The criticism levelled against this is that it conceives the aesthetic experience as a purely intellectual pleasure, and aesthetic contemplation as a state in which, with considerable detachment, the work of art is weighed and the degree of similarity with an original in nature assessed.¹ But how far is such criticism really justified? Schlegel's words are: "wenn ich die Aehnlichkeit des Bildes mit dem Vorbilde bemerke, so empfinde ich ein Vergnügen."² Taken thus alone, the statement does admit of an interpretation such as the above. But does the evidence of his writing as a whole support such a view? Did he, in fact, think that the perception of similarity resulted only after a careful assessment of points of likeness and difference; that the recipient must first be intellectually convinced of the resemblance? A careful reading of his work reveals that he did not. Neither his specific remarks on the way in which the similarity strikes us, nor his view of the kind of public to which art appeals, will allow us to assume that he viewed the state of aesthetic contemplation as an impersonal, purely intellectually interested relation.

In the theory of imitation, he says, we are dealing only with things which concern the imagination.³ It is here, in the imagination, that the comparison between imitation and original is made; and the original is thus our idea of a thing, not the thing itself.⁴ For this reason, it is useless to paint things in such a position that they cannot be recognised, "ob sie gleich mit der Natur übereinkommen;"⁵ since the similarity must strike us, not be ascertained by a process of reasoning. Hence an imitation can be good, "wenn es nur unter gewissen Umständen einen Eindruck in unsere Einbildungskraft macht, der dem Vorbilde gleich kommt."⁶ With our understanding, we may be well

1 Wolff (Op. cit., p. 81) assumes that Schlegel conceived the perception of similarity between work of art and original as a purely intellectual process.

2 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 130; Ant., p. 129).

3 Ibid., p. 110; Ant., p. 109.

4 Ibid., p. 145; Ant., p. 144.

5 Ibid., p. 138; Ant., p. 137.

6 Ibid., p. 147; Ant., p. 146.

aware that heroes and noble personages are but as other men; but, "kaum wird unsere Einbildungskraft rege gemacht, so messen wir dem Rufe wider Glauben bey...."¹ Imagination and understanding, then, may well be at odds; but that is of no account if the work of art succeeds in convincing the former; for we shall judge, not by what we know to be true, but by what we feel to be true: "Auch so gar da, wo wir mit dem Verstande zur Wahrheit durchgedrungen sind, wird unsere Einbildungskraft unserm Verstande noch widersprechen. Wir werden anders urtheilen, wenn wir die wahre Beschaffenheit der Sache untersuchen, und anders, wenn wir Vorbild und Bild in unsern Gedanken gegeneinander halten."² Appreciation is thus clearly not dependent on the detailed study of original objects, characters, or events which have occasioned a work of art. It is rather a question of sudden aperçus of a powerful impression of likeness. This will produce the desired pleasure even on those occasions when our understanding informs us that there are noticeable departures from the original. We find this in mosaics³ and in statues which, because they have to make their impressions from a distance or from a height, are larger than life-size and roughly hewn. Art goes beyond nature in giving a clear presentation; for its appeal is to the imagination.⁴ It is this, not the understanding, which must be convinced of similarity.

The advantage of exact similarity is, of course, that it satisfies "die genauesten Kenner."⁵ But the kind of public which Schlegel has in view does not, by any means, consist of Kenner

1 Von der Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, p. 171; Ant., p. 100).

2 Ibid., p. 172; Ant., p. 101.

3 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 147; Ant., p. 146).

4 Ibid., p. 137; Ant., p. 138.

5 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 49; Ant., p. 83). Schlegel is here referring to the reactions of students of history to historical drama. He is, perhaps, not far wrong in assuming that, in their case, anachronisms and inaccuracies may prove so disturbing that they preclude or diminish aesthetic appreciation.

only. He demands an active spectator or reader, but it is an activity of the imagination which he has in mind, and this is not limited to intellectuals. To win the appreciation of a connoisseur is, admittedly, more desirable than to provide amusement for fools. But the alternatives are in reality not nearly so sharply opposed. There is a large body of ordinary people who are not fools. The aim should be to please as many of these as possible; if, at the same time, we induce fools to take pleasure in our work so much the better. A difference does, of course, exist between the "Beyfall der Kenner" and the "Vergnügen kluger Leute"; but Schlegel does not think that the two are mutually exclusive. The same work can achieve both. His definition of "der Kluge" in this respect is interesting and important, for it is the real source of the difference between his ideal public and Gottsched's. For appreciation of a work of art, the latter postulates in the recipient a knowledge of the "rules". Schlegel does not mind whether he knows these or not: "Ein Kluger..... im Absehen auf die Kunst, ist jeglicher, der von keinen Vorurtheilen, was diese Kunst betrifft eingenommen ist, und eine genügsame Zärtlichkeit des Gefühls hat, dass die Werke dieser Kunst einen Eindruck auf ihn machen."¹ Thus he even prefers the uninitiated, since their receptivity is less likely to be dulled by false prejudice; and he demands only delicacy of feeling and a readiness to receive impressions. Such sensitiveness has nothing whatsoever to do with learning: "Der ungelehrte Kluge gilt hier so viel als der Gelehrte; derjenige, der die Kunst nicht versteht, ist so wohl werth vergnügt zu werden, als der sie versteht."² Overlearned

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 142 - 144; Ant., pp. 141 - 143).

2 Ibid.

Antoniewicz, following the text of the Critische Beyträge has: "derjenige, der die Kunst versteht, ist so wohl werth vergnügt zu werden, als der sie nicht versteht." I have followed the text of the Werke since this version seems to me to be more in tune with the general trend of Schlegel's thought.

descriptions are out of place in works which are intended to reach a wide public, for they cannot possibly make a general appeal.¹ Unless the artist has a particular public in mind, he should aim at making an impression on people in general, not presupposing any specialised knowledge.²

Five years later Schlegel still held these views on the kind of appeal which art should make, and we see their influence at work in the suggestions which he made for the repertoire of the new Danish theatre. Even the "Pöbel" is included in Schlegel's theatre-going public. Since, in his view, taste can be improved by contact with art, he hopes to educate the taste of this section of the people by a gradual process. They demand something which appeals to their rather coarse imagination, but it would be a mistake to ignore them on this account when planning the repertoire of a theatre. Indeed this is only done by people who sit in a study and prescribe rules; those who work from experience know that the common people must first be attracted to the theatre before one can set about improving their taste.³

All that Schlegel demands of his reader or spectator then is the liveliness of an unspoilt imagination - "die Lebhaftigkeit einer nicht verderbten Einbildungskraft"⁴ - for it is to this that a work of art makes its appeal. Such stress on the rôle of imagination in artistic appreciation proves that Schlegel cannot fairly be charged with a narrow intellectualism. To understand fully the importance he attributes to imagination, it is necessary to take into consideration his treatment of the subject of illusion. This will then lead us back to a deeper understanding of what he considered to be the scope and nature of artistic imitation.

1 Ibid., pp. 150, 151; Ant., p. 150.

2 Ibid., pp. 143, 144; Ant., pp. 142, 143.

3 Gedanken (Werke, III, pp. 266, 269; Ant., pp. 197, 201).

4 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 143; Ant., p. 142).

Schlegel's view of art makes his rejection of illusion - in the sense of deception - inevitable. As we have seen, he is so much aware that art differs from nature, that he suspects that the special kind of pleasure aroused by art is, in some way, intimately connected with this difference, is indeed dependent on it. Hence his assertion that although pleasure arises when the imitation is held against the original and similarity is perceived, it entirely fails to ensue when the two are so much alike that they are confused in the imagination.¹

It has been urged that Schlegel was concerned only to reject that crude illusion which involves a real deception of the senses.² But the position is not quite so simple. At that period it was usual to think that a work of art did in actual fact deceive the spectators into thinking that they were witnessing reality;³ pleasure was supposed to ensue when they discovered that they were not. It was clearly this kind of deception which Lessing had in mind when he wrote to Mendelssohn that illusion is the concern of the producer and not of the dramatist at all. On these grounds he rejected the idea of illusion in art, since he conceived it only as a deception of the senses. Mendelssohn was aware of a different kind of illusion; for he replied to Lessing that it can be induced by any of the arts and is not, therefore, solely dependent on production.⁴ It will be seen that Schlegel, like Mendelssohn, was also aware of an illusion which

1 Ibid., p. 149; Ant., p. 148. Cf. Über die Comödie (Werke, III, pp. 77, 78; Ant., pp. 13, 14).

2 L. Goldstein (Moses Mendelssohn und die deutsche Aesthetik, Königsberg, 1904, Teutonia, 3) puts forward this contention (pp. 140 - 2). See, however, below pp. 104 ff., for Schlegel's rejection of a different kind of illusion.

3 As Goldstein points out (p. 140), the frequent references to anecdotes in which men and animals were deceived by painting are testimony that this belief was current.

4 Letter to Mendelssohn, 18 December, 1756. Mendelssohn replied in January, 1757, enclosing his Gedanken von der Illusion (R. Petsch, Lessings Briefwechsel mit Mendelssohn und Nicolai über das Trauerspiel, Leipzig, 1910, Philosophische Bibliothek, CXXI). However, by the time of the Dramaturgie Lessing has accepted Mendelssohn's view.

was not merely physical. But he could not entirely ignore crude deception of the senses since current theories of aesthetic pleasure were based on it. If his argument often appears naive, we have to remember that it was a naive belief which he wished to expose.

In order to shew that any attempt to account for aesthetic pleasure by "deception" must prove unsatisfactory, he takes the example of a man who is momentarily deceived into thinking that a painted head is a head in stone, and contrasts the effect of such "real deception" with what the critics are wont to call "angenehmer Betrug". He suggests that the man, overcome with shame, would refrain from mentioning his mistake; that the effect would, in fact, be unpleasant and annoying.¹ His aim is to prove that the very idea of deception is unfruitful in connection with art.

But his rejection of illusion as the basis of the aesthetic experience goes beyond such cases of trompe l'oeil. Otherwise he would accept Straube's assertion that the general theatrical milieu will suffice to remind us that we are not witnessing reality. Schlegel, however, refuses to accept this on the ground that it is not such extraneous reminders, but features within the play itself, which must distinguish it from actuality.² He thus implies that a drama in itself, apart from factors of production, is capable of creating illusion; that, although it may not deceive the senses, it can succeed in deceiving the emotions. One reacts to the people and events in it, as though they were people and events of reality: "Die Kunst der spielenden Personen entzückt ihn so sehr, dass er die verkleideten Personen für wahrhafte Helden, und ihr Leiden für ein wahrhaftes Leiden ansieht."³ This kind of emotional illusion Schlegel also rejects as an explanation of aesthetic pleasure. Nor, again

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 135; Ant., p. 134).

2 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 79; Ant., p. 15).

3 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 134; Ant., p. 133). It should be noted that such a reaction is not incompatible with being fully aware that we are in the theatre. The question is one of emotional illusion, not of deception of the senses. Straube, however, could only have been thinking of the crudest deception of the senses when he suggested that the general theatrical milieu would suffice to remind us that we are not witnessing reality.

is he content to accept as an explanation that alternation between absorption and awareness which was usually thought to characterise the contemplation of art. A child that weeps when it sees a girl beaten on the stage, may cease to weep when told that the tears of the actress are not "real". But the discovery, though it may pacify and soothe, will not induce pleasure. The child has felt "eine wahre und nicht eine angenehme Traurigkeit". Schlegel conceives a state in which awareness coexists with absorption instead of following upon it, and he tries to describe this by saying that we are never actually deceived by art; there is only a tendency for us to be deceived. With his phrase "eine Gefahr zu irren", he draws attention at once to the difference and to the similarity between our reactions when contemplating art and our reactions in every-day life.¹ His conclusion is, then, that something within the work of art itself, not any attendant circumstance, must keep us aware that it is not reality; and that the emotions aroused by it, though they may be akin to those evoked by objects and events of ordinary life, must yet in some way differ from them.

It was to ensure this that Schlegel advised the actor to

- 1 Ibid., p. 135; Ant., pp. 133, 134. Cf. B. Aiken-Sneath, op. cit., p. 31. Miss Aiken-Sneath's train of thought is not clear when she says: "Too close an imitation Schlegel calls eine Gefahr zu irren, for complete illusion is destructive of aesthetic enjoyment." Schlegel's words are: "Aber in der That finde ich meinem Gefühle nach bei der allergeauuesten Nachahmung etwas, welches vielmehr eine Gefahr zu irren als ein Irrthum ist, so lange nämlich das Bild bey dieser genauen Nachahmung noch vergnügt." (the italics are Schlegel's own). In my view this can only mean that even the most naturalistic work, so long as it is art, i.e. gives rise to the appropriate reaction, does not deceive one into thinking it is reality, i.e. does not create illusion in the sense of deception. Provided there is only a tendency to be deceived (eine Gefahr zu irren) and aesthetic satisfaction ensues, the imitation is not closer to reality than it should be. In theory, at least, Schlegel does not reject naturalism.

create a conception of death, in which, by excluding certain physical elements, attention is focussed on the more spiritual aspects. For the same reason he deplored a too naturalistic portrayal of madness.¹ In each case our emotions should be akin to those which we might experience if actually confronted by death or madness; and yet at the same time they must differ from them. This conviction that art and deception are wholly alien to one another prompted too his demand for verse as a medium for comedy. If this be used, he said, reality may then be imitated as closely as is conceivably possible; the verse will ensure that the play calls forth the desired aesthetic reaction: "so können Handlungen, Sitten, Worte, Kleidung, Geberden, Stimme, völlig mit einer wahrhaften Handlung übereinstimmen; da indessen der einige harmonische Klang.....sie von einer wahrhaften Handlung unterscheidet.....Und wenn uns die Worte an sich selbst verführen zu glauben, dass wir die Personen reden hören, so erinnert der Wohlklang unsere Ohren, dass es ein Werk der Kunst sey."² Naive as the formulation undoubtedly is, it does not obscure the fact that Schlegel glimpsed something of the effect which verse may have on a dramatic action treated in other respects with complete naturalism.

Illusion, then, in Schlegel's view, plays no part in aesthetic contemplation. He rejects uncompromisingly that kind of art whose aim it is to imitate nature so as to trick the spectator, whether through the senses or through the emotions, into the belief that it is nature which he beholds. His chief desire is to draw attention to the element of detachment which is present in our attitude when we look upon art. Indeed the whole of his analysis of aesthetic pleasure is an attempt to do justice to that aspect of it.³ But this does not mean that he therefore took that aspect to be an account of the whole experience.

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 150; Ant., p. 149). Unfortunately at this point Schlegel goes outside the sphere of art when he suggests that an actor who in his zeal left the stage and raved among the audience would not earn their thanks. This is the crudest type of illusion and Schlegel here falls far below the degree of penetration he had shewn when he insisted on a strict separation of dramatic illusion from the question of theatrical milieu.

2 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, pp. 80, 81; Ant., pp. 15, 17).

3 Cf. Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 155; Ant., p. 154): "Man muss überlegen, wie starken Eindruck eine jegliche Art der Nachahmung, so wohl im Absehen auf ihre Aehnlichkeit als im Absehen auf die Empfindungen, die sie sonst zuwege bringt, verursache, und sie so einrichten, dass die Empfindung der Aehnlichkeit allezeit einen Vorzug vor allen übrigen Empfindungen behalte."

His insistence on the detached element in the experience, does not imply that he conceived the aesthetic reaction as one of serenely unmoved pleasure in form alone. His emphasis on that aspect is but part of his campaign against the use of crude naturalism with intent to deceive. Along with his emphasis on the detached element in the aesthetic experience, implicit indeed in the phrase "eine Gefahr zu irren", goes a demand that the reader or spectator shall be moved and imaginatively convinced.

The demand that drama shall move the spectator is not, as has been assumed, confined to the writings of the Copenhagen period. It was on this assumption that Wolff based his argument that Schlegel later abandoned his imitation theory and, more especially, his analysis of aesthetic pleasure in favour of a less intellectual point of view.¹ But already in the criticism of Klaj's Herodes and in the comparison of Shakespeare and Gryphius (1741) Schlegel assumes that the characters will awaken strong feelings in the spectators;² states that the purpose of tragedy is to arouse noble emotions and passions;³ and speaks of the catastrophe, "welche die Zuschauer in die höchsten Leidenschaften stürzt."⁴ It is true that in the two essays on imitation he does not refer so directly to emotion and passion. But he is there dealing with the effect of art in general, rather than with the methods by which each art, in its own particular way, achieves this effect; he is there attempting to put his finger on the constant feature in all aesthetic appreciation, not to trace the infinite variations of response evoked by this or that particular work of art. Nevertheless the demand that the artist shall subdue his material so that the effects produced arise not directly from that material, but indirectly through the art it has become - a demand which is the very core of the essay Von der Unähnlichkeit - clearly takes for granted that art does move, but in its own peculiar way. In the Abhandlung von der Nachahmung Schlegel further explicitly requires that every work of art shall make a "strong impression". To this end it must be rigorously pruned of everything which is irrelevant or disturbing to such an impression, wearying the recipient or diverting his

1 Wolff, op. cit., p. 154.

2 Herodes (Werke, III, p. 25; Ant., p. 49).

3 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 60; Ant., p. 92).

4 Ibid., p. 42; Ant., p. 78.

attention: "Ein Gedicht wird niemals gelesen, dass man seinen Verstand üben will." For this reason, clarity in the ordinary sense of the word is not enough; the aim is to make the thing live again in the imagination.¹

The remarks in the later essays on the necessity of creating drama which will appeal not only to the understanding, but to the heart, thus come as no surprise to the careful reader.² Widening experience and increased assurance have combined to make the expression more trenchant and convincing, but the train of thought is still that of the earlier essays. "Unähnlichkeiten, die nicht merklich sind, sind im Absehen auf unsre Empfindung keine Unähnlichkeiten" Schlegel had stated in the essay on Shakespeare.³ In his last work the significance of this pregnant statement becomes fully articulate. The spectator must suffer and hope, must be kept thereby "in derselben Entzückung bis ans Ende"; for, so long as he is thus rapt, he is unlikely to notice differences between the drama and the actuality it represents and the poet can convince and persuade him.⁴ Schlegel thus applies to the particular art of drama the general principle laid down in the essays on imitation, viz., that the necessary dissimilarities between art and nature must be compensated for by a convincing likeness in the rest:

- 1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, pp. 138 - 140; Ant., pp. 137 - 139).
- 2 Cf. Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 283; Ant., p. 213): "Die allerfeinste Erfindung der Fabel, und die allerschönste Ausführung der Charaktere ist vergeblich, wenn dadurch nur der Verstand und nicht zugleich das Herz eingenommen wird. Der Dichter wird eine schöne Arbeit verfertigt haben, an der niemandem gelegen ist."
- 3 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 49; Ant., p. 83).
- 4 Gedanken (Werke, III, pp. 282, 294; Ant., pp. 212, 223). Cf. p. 283; Ant., pp. 212, 213: "Nie kann man zuverlässiger von der Aufmerksamkeit des Zuschauers versichert seyn, als wenn sein Herz an der Handlung Antheil nimmt," and "Eine Handlung ohne Leidenschaften ist keine Handlung."

"Desto eifriger muss man sich bemühen seinem Vorbilde nahe zu kommen wo es die Regel nicht verbietet, damit man durch die übrigen Aehnlichkeiten die regelmässige Unähnlichkeit des Bildes überdecken und verbergen möge."¹ Although the recipient is not to be deceived by art, he is, nevertheless, to be convinced. With great penetration, Schlegel seized upon the paradox of art when he concluded his essay Von der Unähnlichkeit by saying that an imitation is then indeed to be praised, "wenn die Unähnlichkeit selbst Aehnlichkeit zu seyn scheint."² With this he epitomised in terms of his imitation theory, all the observations he had made and was to make on the power of drama to reveal more clearly than reality the true nature and significance of characters and events. He realised that art, by departing from nature, appears, paradoxically enough, more convincing than nature itself.

We seem to have moved a long way from the title of this section - Pleasure - and to have returned to a discussion of imitation. But the very fact that in thus following Schlegel's train of thought we should have been led back to our point of departure, shews how inextricably linked with his views on aesthetic pleasure are the modifications which he makes in the theory of imitation of nature. The aim of the imitation which produces art is not instruction, nor yet illusion, but pleasure of a specific kind. If, contends Schlegel, an artist is clear as to the nature of this pleasure, he then knows how closely he should imitate reality. For his work should be life-like and realistic enough to convince and to move, but never so close to nature as to evoke in the recipient a response such as nature itself would evoke.

1 Von der Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, p. 176; Ant., p. 105).

2 Ibid.

Schlegel's Application of these Aesthetic
Principles to Drama.

The test of an aesthetic theory is in its application. Whatever Schlegel wrote about art in general, it was always with drama uppermost in his mind. And this form of art provides an excellent test of his imitation theory because in drama, perhaps more clearly than in any other of the arts, the very divergence from nature must contribute to make a more convincing impression. What is the method by which, in Schlegel's view, drama achieves this? We recall the statement in the Abhandlung von der Nachahmung that dissimilarities only ensue if wrong proportions are introduced, not if certain features are omitted.¹ Applied to drama, this can only mean that, although actions on the stage may not be the same as in real life, they must yet follow on each other just as reasonably. If the spectator is made aware of the motives for each action in a way that is rarely possible in real life, then the dramatic imitation will seem more convincing to him than any mere photographic reproduction of a section of reality. Such an interpretation is confirmed by Schlegel's own words. The dramatist's task is to reveal action "mit ihren zureichenden Ursachen".² Herein lies the difference between his methods and those of the historian. For, although, as Schlegel pointed out in the early letter to his brother, it is the historian's duty to account for actions as well as to describe them, he nevertheless can only report such motives and causes as he actually knows. The poet on the other hand must provide at all times sufficient and adequate motives. If we ask: sufficient for what? the answer is clearly: sufficient to make character and action convincing. If the spectator is given enough information about the motives leading up to an action, he will believe in that action: "Man hat die Absichten und Mittel mit ihren Folgen, und die Folgen wiederum mit ihren neuen Folgen

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 117; Ant., p. 115).

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 287; Ant., p. 216). Cf., too, p. 272; Ant., p. 203: "Das Theater.....ist wie eine Schilderey..... die manchmal uns die Dinge in grösserer Deutlichkeit zeigt, als wir sie in der Natur erblicken können."

zu verbinden."¹ In this way, said Schlegel, it is easy to make the action of a drama probable: "Durch jeden Sprung hingegen, den ich begehe, wenn ich etwas ohne Ursache geschehen lasse, verursache ich eine Unwahrscheinlichkeit."² If we wish to seek textual parallels to prove the intimate connection between Schlegel's later essays on drama and his general imitation theory, no better example can be found than the sentence just quoted. It is a literal translation into dramatic terms of the principle referred to above - that dissimilarity only ensues when false proportions are introduced; and the parallel appears even more striking when we recall the illustration given in the earlier essay: "Wenn aber der Maler an dieses Brustbild unmittelbar die Füße anmalen wollte, und die übrigen Teile des Leibes aussen liesse; so würden wir die Unähnlichkeit so gleich gewahr werden."³

The spectator of drama is, then, to be convinced by a strict adherence to probability. But probability of what kind? Clearly not of an external kind. Examination of Schlegel's treatment of medium revealed that he rejected standards of "äusserliche Möglichkeit" for art; that he refused to apply criteria of everyday probability to form. What he demands is probability within the form, causal probability of the strictest kind. This is stated quite plainly: "Eine Begebenheit ist alsdann wahrscheinlich, wenn sie ihre zureichende Ursache hat."⁴ Nowhere perhaps do Schlegel's views so markedly contrast with those of Gottsched as on this much discussed question of probability. And, since in that period the attitude of a writer towards such things as rules, conventions, the use of historical material, largely depended on his view of the relation between art and probability, it is not surprising to find that on these and on other kindred questions the opinions of master and pupil shew considerable divergence.

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 117; Ant., p. 115). Cf. Würde und Majestät (Werke, III, p. 219; Ant., p. 171) where Schlegel tells us that the hero moves us by explaining the reasons for what he feels.

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 282; Ant., p. 212).

3 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 117; Ant., p. 116).

4 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 282; Ant., p. 212).

Rules and Probability. From the outset Schlegel's attitude to rules was bound to differ from Gottsched's because of the reliance which he placed on his own experience. In his first article he admonishes Straube to trust the evidence of his own feeling. The latter had apparently confessed to a love of verse which extended even to comedy in verse, and his attacks on that form were based solely on respect for "rules", in particular for the canon of probability. Schlegel urges that a judgment thus arrived at by a priori reasoning is untenable, when all the empirical evidence of one's own reactions argues against it; "Bis diese Stunde kann ich alle Gründe, die Sie wider die Comödie in Versen vorgebracht haben, für nichts anders als für critische Gewissensscrupel ansehen, so lange sich diese Empfindung bei ihnen findet."¹ It seems likely, he goes on, that most people who reject comedy in verse have reached the decision in a similar way, by ignoring their own feeling and taste.

In the Abhandlung von der Nachahmung, Schlegel, as we saw, had recourse to empirical methods to shew that pleasure is the chief purpose of art. In the essay on comedy in verse he reveals the process by which he arrived at a clearer understanding of this pleasure: "Dasjenige, was wir von der Natur unsers Vergnügens sagen können, haben wir aus der Erfahrung schliessen müssen, Indem wir acht gegeben haben, was uns diese oder jene angenehme oder unangenehme Empfindung verursacht habe."² While fully recognising that Schlegel owed much to French sources, there seems no reason to doubt the truth of his own words. Both his choice of examples and the coherence of his theory as a whole suggest a fusing of ideas as they passed through the alembic of his own experience, rather than the mere arbitrary ordering of them until they were forced into a system. It was not only for help in understanding the nature of art and its effects that Schlegel relied on experience. He was firmly convinced of its value in estimating the merits of any individual work of art: "Wir können eben so sicher von der Schönheit einer Sache aus dem Vergnügen, das sie den meisten Leuten zuwege bringt....."

1 Über die Comödie (Werke, III, p. 86; Ant., p. 22).

2 Ibid., p. 83; Ant., p. 19.

urtheilen, als wir sie aus den Regeln erkennen."¹ Thus in his earliest work experience and direct appreciation have at least as much validity for him as rules.

The position by the time he writes his last work is fundamentally unchanged, although Schlegel is now more openly intolerant of pedantic methods. He now makes scornful reference to works produced in the "Studierstube", and mocks at attempts to concoct dramas "nach Recepten, wie das Frauenzimmer seine Puddings macht."² The Danes in their new theatrical enterprise are to find the kind of drama best suited to their taste by a process of trial and error; and, although they may well benefit by the dramatic theory and criticism of other nations, they must avoid following them slavishly.³

This belief in the validity of his own experience probably helped to make him critical of the wholesale importing of French products, and able to draw a fine distinction between what was really deserving of study and imitation and what was worthless or ill-suited to the German people.⁴ Again, when considering the value of different aspects of dramatic form, he makes constant appeal to the criterion of experience. His acceptance of certain features and his rejection of others are by no means arbitrary;⁵ he is guided throughout by his intolerance of the purely mechanical application of rules. Hence such things as the rule of thumb procedure for dividing a play into acts become the target for his sharpest satire: "Die allerleichteste

1 Ibid.

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 265; Ant., p. 197).

3 Ibid., p. 262; Ant., p. 194.

4 Ibid., p. 296; Ant., pp. 224, 225.

5 Antoniewicz (op. cit., p. LXIV) thinks differently. Having, in my view wrongly, assumed Schlegel's narrow adherence to the rule of unity of place, he continues: "In zwei anderen Punkten zeigt er dagegen schon freiere Anschauungen", and proceeds to Schlegel's treatment of the monologue and the aside. He assumes that Schlegel's views on the unities and his views on monologues and asides are unrelated; that on the one question he remained blindly conservative, slavishly following French authorities, while on the other he, for some reason, shewed considerable insight and criticised these same authorities.

Art ein Stück von gegebner Grösse in 5 Aufzüge zu theilen; ist, wie man eine Linie in 5 Theile schneidet. Das Stück wird erst gemacht, als wenn es einen einzigen Aufzug haben sollte, und die Personen des vorhergehenden Auftritts sehen allezeit die Personen des folgenden kommen. Hierauf zählt man die Versen, und nimmt in jeglichen Aufzug ungefähr so viel als in den andern, nur dass der Aufzug sich nicht mitten im Auftritte anfängt. Hernachmalen schreibt man zweyte, dritte, vierte, Handlung....dazu. Und diese Art ein Stück in Aufzüge zu theilen, ist nicht ohne Exempel. Der Abt von Aubignac selber hat dieselbe schon gerühmet, wie wohl ein wenig verändert. Der Poet nimmt sich vor, eine gewisse Anzahl Verse zu machen, und wenn er den 5ten Theil davon fertig hat, nennt er es einen Aufzug."¹ Similar treatment is accorded to the rule of not leaving the stage empty. The measure of Schlegel's scorn is the very scant attention paid to this famous rule. Apart from the reference in the passage just quoted only one indirect, but none the less biting, comment; "Mittlerweile kann Herodes in dem Zimmer auf und ab spazieren, oder wie auf unserm Schauplatz nicht ungewöhnlich ist, ohne Ursache abgehen, und hernach aus der Ursache wiederkommen, sich den Verlauf der Sache von den Zuschauern und sonst nirgends anders erzählen zu lassen."²

The same motive leads him to reject certain conventional features in the content of French drama. Thus the inordinate piling up of love intrigue comes in for some witty criticism. Not that Schlegel was averse to love as a theme for drama, but he rightly felt that in many French plays the love-interest was no longer used as real dramatic material, but had become stereotyped into convention, and was little more than a mechanical means of conducting the intrigue. The sole intention was apparently to get as many people as possible into the right pair of arms in Act V. Schlegel achieves one of his best satiric effects by letting Regnard in the Totengespräche blatantly admit this to be his purpose:

Regnard. So hätte ich nicht mehr, als eine Heirath in eine Comödie bringen sollen? Dieses habe ich mir selten nachsagen lassen. Wo es nicht anders angangen ist,

1 Klaß's Herodes (Werke, III, pp. 14, 15; Ant., p. 40). Cf. Gottsched's recipe (C.D., 1737, p. 674) which Schlegel must surely have had in mind.

2 Ibid.

habe ich wenigstens eine Heirath zwischen dem Herrn und der Jungfer und eine zwischen dem Diener und der Bedienten gestiftet.

Demokrit. Du bist für das menschliche Geschlecht sehr besorgt.

Regnard. Die Liebe ist auch wirklich eine nützliche Sache auf dem Theater. Sie macht, dass es den Poeten ohne grosses Nachsinnen niemals an Materie fehlet, seine Auftritte auszufüllen."¹

It was not only in comedy that the figures were thus moved about as on a chessboard, all considerations of motive and character forgotten. Schlegel wrote to his brother: "Die französischen Romanverwirrungen herrschen auch in ihren Tragödien, und diese letzten scheinen ein Zusammenhang von lauter Liebeserklärungen zu seyn..... Hierüber wird der Charakter ganz vergessen."² He may well have had in mind tragedies of the type of Pradon's La Troade, Oreste et Pylade by De la Grange-Chancel or Didon by Le Franc Pompignan,³ which have recently been suggested as more likely sources of his own adaptations than the classical originals.⁴ De la Grange-Chancel's play has, for instance, no fewer than four separate love "interests", a new character, queen Thomiris, being introduced to provide an opposite number to Oreste and a further complication in the plot.

Another mechanical device which Schlegel criticised was the inclusion of the inevitable servant, a dummy figure not considered worthy of characterisation, often a mere sounding-board for his master's wit. To Demokrit's objection that, since he wished to flee humanity, he would have been unlikely to take a servant with

1 Demokrit (Werke, III, pp. 118, 119; Ant., p. 64).

2 Über die Trauerspiele der Alten (Werke, III, p. 209; Ant., p. 6).

3 Pradon, La Troade, 1695; De la Grange-Chancel, Oeuvres, Paris 1713; Le Franc Pompignan, Didon, Paris 1734.

4 Cf. H. Buenemann, Elias Schlegel und Wieland als Bearbeiter antiker Tragödien, Leipzig, 1928.

him, Regnard makes the following answer: "Über dieses müsset ihr wissen, dass es nicht Gebrauch bey uns ist, einen Herren aufzubringen, der keinen Diener hätte: weil uns allzuviel Gelegenheit aus den Händen gieng, lustige Dinge zu sagen."¹ Schlegel returns to the subject again in the Gedanken: "Der Engelländer.....sieht die Thorheiten der vorgestellten Personen ein, ohne dass er die Glossen der Bedienten darzu nöthig hat."²

All this criticism is directed against those who viewed the making of drama as the purely mechanical manipulation of material until, by hook or by crook, it complied - in appearance at least - with certain rules and followed an accepted pattern. Schlegel did not wish to see rules obtruding, but treated so that they formed an organic part of the whole; so blended with the content that they seemed its natural form. With reference to the exposition he says: "Wir haben eine Regel, dass man gleich zu Anfange eines Stückes den Schauplatz, die Person, die da redet, und die Umstände worinnen sie sich befindet, so viel möglich ist, entdecken soll."³ In the letter to his brother he reveals what he considered to be the ideal way of applying this rule; "In dem Philoktetes saget Ulysses dem Neoptolemus, dass er auf der Insel Lemnos sey, und darinnen ist sein Charakter auf eine unvergleichliche Art in Acht genommen.....Ulysses war ein Mann, der in seinen Unternehmungen überaus versteckt war; er kannte das Feuer des jungen Neoptolemus, und eben deswegen hatte er alles vor ihm geheim gehalten, bis sie auf der Insel ankamen, da er ihm erstlich entdeckt, wo sie hingekommen, wen sie suchen und was er zu thun habe."⁴ Thus from the first he admires that type of exposition which, while serving its technical purpose of conveying all necessary information to the spectator, yet appears to serve no other than the revealing of character, and forms an integral part of the action. In his last work the understanding which he had thus early expressed as direct appreciation is formulated into a maxim: "Endlich gehört auch dieses zu den nothwendigen Kennzeichen eines guten Stücks, dass der Verfasser beständig darinnen an die Zuschauer gedacht habe, dass er aufmerksam gewesen sey,

1 Demokrit (Werke, III, pp. 118, 119; Ant., p. 64).

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 264; Ant., p. 196).

3 Klaüs Herodes (Werke, III, p. 8; Ant., p. 34).

4 Über die Trauerspiele der Alten (Werke, III, p. 207; Ant., p. 4).

alles, was zur Handlung gehört, ihnen auf das deutlichste und ordentlichste zu erzählen; ihnen zu berichten, was für Personen sie vor sich sehen, und an welchem Orte dieselben erscheinen; und dass er gleichwohl sich nicht merken lasse, als ob er wisse, dass Zuschauer zugegen sind."¹

But nowhere is Schlegel's dislike of the observance of the letter rather than the spirit of rules more clearly revealed than in his treatment of the unities of time and place. His attitude to this all-important feature of the regular drama which Gottsched wished to popularise, has never been satisfactorily analysed. The Gedanken zur Aufnahme eines dänischen Theaters presents little difficulty, its tone being straightforward and serious. It is the early essays, particularly the review of Klaj's Herodes, which have given rise to misapprehension.

Like Regnard's Démocrate, Klaj's play serves as a peg on which to hang criticism of certain features of French plays and of contemporary German imitations. Schlegel is all the time tilting at the French and trying to shew that an early German play, which they would certainly ridicule and condemn, is, when analysed, no funnier than many of their own. The tone throughout is satirical. Antoniewicz, however, assumes that in one single passage - that concerning unity of place - Schlegel drops the ironical tone and makes certain perfectly serious proposals.² Not only is it unlikely that he would do this without in some way warning the reader of the change, - and even the most careful reading reveals no subtle nuance in tone -, but such an interpretation presupposes a totally unaccountable lapse on Schlegel's part from the stand taken, not only in this essay, but in others written about the same time.

In the passage in question,³ Schlegel suggests that, to minimise somewhat the difficulties of production, plays should either be written with one kind of setting, or else they should give such vague indications of the setting that any scenery which might be to hand would serve, "wie man denn von dieser letzten Art, von unsern Herrn Nachbarn den Franzosen, Stücke hat." He continues: "Es könnte dieses dem Poeten nicht schwer werden, denn er dürfte nur gar an den Ort nicht denken wo die Handlung vorgeinge." Besides helping the actors, this would make it easier

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 292; Ant., p. 220).

2 Antoniewicz, op. cit., LXIII.

3 Klaj's Herodes (Werke, III, pp. 11, 12; Ant., pp. 37, 38).

for the dramatist to observe the unity of place: "Wenn man einen Schauplatz nicht füglich an einen einzigen Ort bringen kann: so gedenket man gar nicht daran, damit der Zuschauer auch nicht daran denken möge; ob es gleich in der Malerey ziemlich wunderlich aussehen möchte, wenn man einen Menschen im Schweben mahlte, und keinen Ort dazu zeichnete, wo er sich befände."

That the passage is satirical would seem to require no further demonstration, especially in view of the ironical effect achieved by the twice reiterated statement: "Und so habe ich gezeigt, dass unser Klaj die Einheit des Ortes erhalten, wenn es gleich nicht bey dem ersten Anblicke des Stückes in die Augen fallen sollte." Antoniewicz, however, assumes that it is serious and, judging Schlegel's source to be Corneille's Discours des trois unités,¹ makes the following comment: "In jenen Jahren gab in solchen Fragen für Schlegel eine Autorität wie Corneille noch begreiflicher Weise den Ausschlag. Auch müssen wir nicht vergessen, dass er damals noch mit halber Seele wenigstens einer Schule angehörte, die ihren ganzen Stolz darein setzte, mechanische, im Grunde unerreichbare Kunstregeln möglichst zu verwirklichen, und deren Oberhaupt unzählige Male diese Einheit als eine der heiligsten Kunstregeln aufseindringlichste anempfahl. Welche Wandlung in Schlegel's Ansichten gerade in dieser Frage vor sich gegangen, werden wir aus den Gedanken zur Aufnahme des dänischen Theaters ersehen."²

This last remark is particularly strange, for in the later essay Schlegel continues very much on the ~~same~~ lines of the earlier. And, indeed, Antoniewicz himself, when he examines the views of the Gedanken, quite rightly points out that they are foreshadowed in the earlier essays; and notably, he says, in the review of Herodes.³ But he confuses the issue still

1 P. Corneille, Discours des trois unités, Oeuvres par M. Ch. Marty-Laveaux, Paris, 1862, I, pp. 117 ff.

2 Antoniewicz, op. cit., LXIII, LXIV.

3 Ibid., CLXII, CLXXIII. In this passage Antoniewicz directly contradicts what he had said above (LXIV).

further and maintains that already in the Schreiben über die Comödie in Versen Schlegel had noted the unity of place as an offence against probability. Now not only does such a remark distort Schlegel's argument in that particular essay,¹ but it renders him guilty of the most flagrant inconsistency. The Schreiben über die Comödie was written in 1740, the review of Herodes in 1741. If we accept Antoniewicz's interpretation, it would mean that Schlegel, who in all else is most consistent, first criticised unity of place as improbable and then in the next year, in an otherwise ironical piece of writing, seriously defended not only the rule itself, but all the manifold improbabilities incurred by attempts to get round this rule and to evade it!

It is scarcely irrelevant to wonder why Antoniewicz supposed that this particular passage, rather than any other, was serious and not ironical. Why not the references to asides and monologues? In this connection Schlegel first gives examples of Klaj's running commentary on the emotions experienced by his characters, and then adds: "Hier sieht man augenscheinlich, was es für Nutzen bringen würde, wenn der Verfasser des Trauerspiels selber in einen Winkel des Theaters treten und zuweilen reden wollte. Wie viel Monologen und wie viel "beyseite" würde er ersparen, die er seinen Personen in den Mund zu legen pflegt, und an denen sich die Kunstrichter so unmenschlich reiben."² In this case Antoniewicz is content to assume that the intent is satire. In other words, Schlegel, who a couple of pages before was wielding the most Gottschedian arguments, is now opposing his master. Antoniewicz is not perturbed by such a change of front, because he apparently considers Schlegel's attitude in each case to be wholly arbitrary and not determined by any single view of art.

1 As has already been shewn (p. 82 above), Schlegel's remark that "unity of place" is improbable was not intended as a criticism. In the essay on comedy in verse he was not concerned with the merits or demerits of the unities but wished to shew that "external" probability is a criterion which cannot be applied to the forms and conventions of art. He therefore lists various aspects of drama which, judged by ordinary standards, must appear improbable, and unity of place is among these.

2 Klaj's Herodes (Werke, III, p. 17; Ant., p. 42).

A passage in Demokrit, also written in 1741, clearly refutes the assumption that Schlegel was serious when, in the essay on Herodes, he suggested methods to evade the rule of unity of place while ostensibly observing it. There Aristoph accuses Regnard: "Du hast das Theater nicht nur einmal, wie du vorgiebst, sondern sehr oft verwandelt, und man weis oft nicht, ob der Ort zu denen Personen, die auf dem Theater erscheinen, oder die Personen zu dem Orte gehen, oder ob der Ort und die Personen einander entgegen kommen."¹

But the most serious weakness of Antoniewicz's view is that it takes no account of Schlegel's letter to his brother (1739). This has the advantage of being unquestionably serious in tone. In it Schlegel expresses his admiration of the way in which Sophocles contrives, in the most probable and natural way, to introduce such a vivid description of the scene that the reader feels himself transported thither; and he criticises the omission of any reference to the setting in contemporary German and French plays: "Statt dass wir jetzo in unsern Tragödien uns begnügen lassen, etwan ein Gemach vorzustellen, wenn das Glück noch gut ist. Denn die meisten, auch die französischen sind so eingerichtet, dass sie eben so wohl in einer Scheune als in einem Gemach könnten vorgegangen seyn; so wenig ist darinnen des Theaters gedacht."² Commenting on the absence of scenic description in the tragedies of Racine who, in other respects, commands his warmest admiration, Schlegel contrasts the vivid impressions conveyed by the Greeks and translates for his brother the opening lines of Sophocles' Electra: "Sohn des Agamemnons! Hier siehst du endlich vor dir, was du lange gewünscht hast. Dieses ist das alte Argos, wohin du dich gesehnet. Hier ist der Hayn der rasenden Jo; hier der lyceische Platz, welcher dem Apollo heilig ist. Hier zur linken ist der berühmte Tempel der Juno..... Der helle Glanz der Sonne wecket schon die Vögel zu einem lauten Morgengesange auf und die düstre Nacht hat den Himmel verlassen."³

These remarks cannot be ignored and they make it seem impossible that Schlegel should have been serious when he suggested two years later that, if the poet had difficulty in observing

1 Demokrit (Werke, III, p. 37; Ant., p. 65).

2 Über die Trauerspiele der Alten (Werke, III, p. 207; Ant., pp. 4, 5).

3 Ibid., p. 208; Ant., pp. 5, 6.

unity of place, he should simply refrain from thinking of any place at all and be content with a colourless background.

On the other hand, the passage in Herodes, satirical as it is, cannot be construed as an attack on the rule itself, as a rejection of unity of place. This would mean that Schlegel was equally inconsistent in another direction. For in the comparison of Shakespeare and Gryphius he undoubtedly deems the observation of the unities to be very important. Furthermore he never attacks or rejects them, not even in the works of the Copenhagen period. How, then, can one interpret this doubtful passage, so that it not only falls in with the general tone of the Herodes essay and makes this a continuous piece of satirical writing, but also forms an integral part of Schlegel's theory and does not conflict with the general trend of his thought?

The problem becomes easier of solution if we remember that the unities of time and place can be interpreted in two different ways. They are now generally associated with a highly-stylised form of drama and felt to be conventions of a very artificial kind. But the period which first saw their introduction into the theatre was one marked by rationalism and a singular lack of imagination. There was a tendency to note and to criticise every discrepancy between the dramatic representation and reality. The unities made it possible to give an almost exact equivalent, and hence the illusion, of reality. "En leur vrai sens," says Lanson, "elles représentent le minimum de convention qu'on ne peut retrancher dans la représentation de la vie.....l'établissement des unités fut en réalité une victoire du réalisme sur l'imagination."¹ Their authority did not even derive from tradition, but from reason. "Je dis que les règles du théâtre ne sont pas fondées en autorité, mais en raison," said l'Abbé d'Aubignac.² The constant attempts to reduce the time limit from one day to the few hours occupied by the actual presentation are proof of the desire for probability which was behind the whole movement. Later indeed the application of the unities gave rise to manifold improbabilities; and, in attempts to conform with the "rules", the principle of probability on which they were based was, paradoxically enough, put to confusion. If we wish, however,

1 G. Lanson, Histoire de la littérature française, Paris, 1906, p. 416.

2 Hedelin, Abbé d'Aubignac, La Pratique du Théâtre, Paris, 1657, pp. 27, 28.

to understand the power and fascination which the unities exercised for so long, we must remember that they bore other fruits than the ridiculous plays of lesser dramatists, who were determined to observe them at the cost of even the most flagrant improbabilities. Turned to account by a poet, they also produced the special and exquisite perfection of the tragedies of Racine. We, to-day, may ask whether these tragedies are what they are because of, or in spite of, the unities. But generations nearer to Racine did not. Tragedy and "rules" here seemed one and indivisible, in such masterly fashion was the content fitted to the "rules" until they blended imperceptibly into a unique form. When the realistic implications of the unities were forgotten, the power of the example still prevailed.

Nevertheless, for the critic, for the rationalist, the aspects of probability and realism implicit in the unities of time and space were a boon. And so, of course, for Gottsched. It is extremely unlikely that, as Antoniewicz suggests, Schlegel could have put Gottsched in a difficult position by pointing out that, if he rejected verse as improbable he must needs logically reject the unities also.¹ For, according to Gottsched, these derived support from the principle of probability and exemplified it, to the greater glory of both. His acceptance of the unities and his rejection of verse are both part and parcel of one attitude to art. He maintains that the unities are probable and the use of verse in comedy is improbable, while Schlegel argues that both are equally improbable. And neither, according to his lights, is inconsistent. For the very simple reason that each has quite a different conception of probability. In a hypothetical argument they would be talking at cross purposes.

When Gottsched speaks of "probability" he has in mind the relation between the spectator and factors of time and space. Whereas Schlegel thinks of the relation between these factors and the dramatic material. He recognises this himself when he says: "Das Mass der Zeit sind die Begebenheiten, die darinn vorgehen."² For him the improbability of the unities lies in

1 Antoniewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. XXXVIII, XXXIX: "Er (Schlegel).... treibt ihn (Gottsched) und Straube....so in die Enge, dass beiden eigentlich nichts übrig bleibt, als entweder die Einheiten zu verwerfen, oder mit denselben auch andere Unwahrscheinlichkeiten, also auch den Vers im Lustspiel gelten zu lassen." Antoniewicz fails to note that Gottsched was wont to defend the unities as eminently "probable".

2 *Gedanken* (*Werke*, III, p. 294; *Ant.*, p. 223).

the fact that so much action is crammed into such a short space of time and made to happen in one place. But he accepts this improbability, along with others, as a convention. For Gottsched, improbability arises when the action of a play lasts longer - or noticeably longer - than the period of time which the spectator spends in watching it; or when the actors change their habitation - or noticeably change it - while he remains sitting in the same place. Still following the same train of thought, Gottsched rejects verse because it is incredible that these people on the stage before him should be able to express themselves rhythmically and invent rhymes on the spur of the moment; and he rejects asides because it is unlikely that, since the spectators catch the actor's remark, his fellow-actors should fail to hear it. While Schlegel, with his view of art, will accept both asides and monologues, with all their improbability, because he thinks of them as devices employed by the dramatist to reveal the thoughts and emotions of his characters. Gottsched's spectator brings with him to the theatre the practical, common-sense judgments of every-day life. Schlegel asks him to leave these behind and, for a time, to accept other standards than those of "äusserliche Möglichkeit."

And so, for Schlegel, the unities are not aids to naturalism. They are conventions of form accepted for the sake of the effect they produce. By confining time and space to these narrowest limits, the dramatist prevents dispersal of interest over external matters, precludes much action of an external kind, and focusses attention on the characters, on the nuances of every change in emotion and will; in Schlegel's own words: "Wenn die Einheit des Ortes und der Zeit beobachtet ist, kann der Zuschauer seine ganze Aufmerksamkeit auf die Handlung, auf die Charaktere und auf die Leidenschaften verwenden."¹ He finally reached the point where he rejected in so many words the naturalistic interpretation of the unities: "Einige Kunstrichter beweisen diese Regeln sehr körperlich," he mocks, "weil nämlich der Zuschauer beständig auf der Bank sitzen bleibe, so solle auch alles an Einem Orte vergehen....."² But he never attacked the unities themselves.

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 294; Ant., p. 222).

2 Ibid., p. 293; Ant., pp. 221, 222.

And, since he preferred to have the scene defined in the text, this meant that, if the unity of place was kept at all, it had to be observed strictly and absolutely. What he ridicules and scorns in Klaj, who has kept the unity of place merely by not defining it, is the sacrificing of probability to rule; probability in the sense of the causal connection of one event with another. It is the attempt to trick the spectator - Corneille uses the expression "tromper l'auditeur" - an idea utterly foreign to Schlegel's whole theory. It is, in short, the mechanical application of the rule which he dislikes. He has no patience with those who consider rules the essential requirement, and think that by observing them they can justify and excuse all offences against character, emotions and probability. He would like to see a rule used, not as an end in itself, but as an aid to obtaining a certain effect. He would prefer dramatists to exercise a strict discipline in the handling of their material and in this way to keep the spirit not the letter of the unities. He knows from experience, he says in the Gedanken, how easy it is to keep the unities of time and place, if one only constructs the play carefully.¹

If Corneille's Discours is the source of the passage on the unity of place in Herodes, then Schlegel has certainly given an ironical twist to the proposals made there. To admit this is far from implying any superiority over Corneille. The historical position is entirely different. Corneille found himself face to face with the unities as a fait accompli. If he wished to please, he must needs observe them. He found them cramping to his genius and hence sought means to evade them. In his Discours he examines various methods by which the poet may free himself while yet appearing bound. In practice he by no means always observed unity of place in the strictest sense. That was left for Racine. Schlegel, on the other hand, is writing at a time when the unities are only beginning to stake their claim in Germany, when it is yet an open question whether they will establish themselves or not. And he has before him, on the one hand, the achievement of Racine; on the other, the improbabilities of the later French dramatists and the clumsy attempts of Gottsched and his pupils. The stand he

1 Ibid., p. 295; Ant., p. 224.

takes up in the Herodes essay shows little understanding of Corneille's historical position or of his needs as a poet and dramatist. But it does make possible a progressive development in his own opinions as regards the unities of time and place.

In the Gedanken his position is, in a sense, unchanged. He still mocks at attempts to evade the unity of place while ostensibly keeping it. He makes the penetrating observation that one is not keeping the unity of place by merely omitting to change the scenery.¹ Discrepancies within the play itself may still be noticeable, even where the scene remains the same throughout, as for example, "wenn eine Person sich als Herr und Bewohner eben des Zimmers aufführt, wo kurz vorher eine andere, als ob sie ebenfalls Herr vom Hause wäre, in aller Gelassenheit mit sich selbst oder mit einem Vertrauten gesprochen, ohne dass dieser Umstand auf eine wahrscheinliche Art entschuldigt wird."² He finally draws the obvious conclusion of the remarks made in the Herodes essay and says that, if the setting is to be left vague in the hope of glossing over improbabilities, one may as well be frank about it and substitute for "Der Schauplatz ist ein Saal in Climenens Haus" the more truthful "Der Schauplatz ist auf dem Theater."³ But instead of offering only one solution of the difficulties involved, he now offers a second. Instead of demanding that the dramatist must so treat his material that he achieves real unity of place, he now suggests that, if the nature of the material requires it, he should frankly change the place rather than give rise to improbabilities. This is the advance in his position; this is the significance of the stand taken at the beginning, which permitted, even made inevitable, such a development. The clear understanding which he shewed in the early essays of how, and how not, a convention should be used, made him able to see that

1 Ibid., p. 294; Ant., p. 223.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid. Climenen is clearly a misprint for Chimenen. The passage has direct reference to that part of the Discours des Trois Unités where Corneille treats of the lieu théâtral (Oeuvres, ed. cit., I, p. 121).

it may, on occasion, be dispensed with. It is, of course, clear that increasing experience of English drama made him aware of a different dramatic form. But, had he not already possessed insight into the function of a "rule" and a strong conviction that other considerations were of greater importance for drama, he must have remained blind to the implications of an unfamiliar form. As it is, he gets as far as understanding that the unities of time and place are not essential features of drama. From this it is but a step to admitting that they are useful for one kind of drama only, that in which the poet renounces external activity for his characters and is interested only in the inner psychological processes, in concentrating "dans un espace aussi restreint que possible de vastes étendues d'âme humaine."¹ Schlegel does not actually take this step. But it is extremely likely that he would very soon have reached such a conclusion; for his understanding of the special kind of drama in which Racine excelled, and of the difference between its methods and effects and those of the English drama, is remarkably clear: "Die Engländer lieben eine viel zusammengesetztere Verwirrung, die sich aber nicht so deutlich entwickelt, wie auf dem französischen Theater, sondern nur die interessantesten Punkte der Handlung bemerkt. Die Franzosen hingegen gehen Schritt vor Schritt in der Handlung fort; sie hüten sich, den geringsten Sprung zu thun; sie dulden keine Unterbrechung durch Nebenwerke, wenn gleich diese Nebenwerke zuletzt zur Vollkommenheit der Haupthandlung mit einstimmen sollten; sie wollen alles erklärt und alles umständlich erzählt haben."² Nor does Schlegel fail to note the connection between this microscopic analysis and the unities of time and place: "Damit eine Handlung in beständiger Bewegung sey, damit stets Folgen aus Folgen entstehen, und nichts durch einen Sprung geschehe; erachtet man für nötig, die Zeit so sehr einzuschliessen, als es möglich ist."³

1 Bélouin, op. cit., p. 104.

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, pp. 262, 263; Ant., pp. 194, 195).

3 Ibid., p. 293; Ant., p. 222.

The Gedanken zur Aufnahme eines dänischen Theaters gives a much greater impression of freedom, as regards the question of the unities, because of the stress laid on the imagination of the spectator: "dieser Geist, (denn mit ihm hat man zu thun, und nicht mit dem Körper, der auf den Bänken sitzt) hat so starke Flügel, dass er dem Poeten auch noch weiter von einer Zeit zur andern, und von einem Orte zum andern folgen könnte, wofern er gehörig davon benachrichtigt würde."¹ With the famous arguments about the exact length of time which the action should take he has little patience; whether 24 hours is too much, whether the spectator can imagine that a night has passed etc. He dismisses them as unimportant: "Doch alles diess macht keine nothwendigen Regeln." But he makes first the penetrating observation: "der Zuschauer sollte wohl, so lange er in der Entzückung ist, durch die Menge von Begebenheiten, die er sieht, durch das viele Ausgesuchte und Nachdenkliche, das er hört, sich bereden lassen, dass er mehr als drittheil Stunden, die währenden Schauspiels verlaufen, dabey zugebracht habe."²

The unities of time and place are deemed to be the servants of unity of action, which Schlegel rightly regarded throughout not as an external rule, but rather as an essential of drama. It was most intimately connected with that cumulative effect which he thought was the purpose of drama. Although in his last work he still demands one action and defines this more closely as containing nothing "welches nicht entweder zur Beförderung, oder zur Hinderniss derjenigen letzten und endlichen Folge gereicht, durch welche die Auflösung geschieht"; yet in the application of the principle he recognises modifications which allow it to embrace English

1 Ibid., p. 221.

2 Ibid., p. 294; Ant., p. 223.

drama: "Wie aber ein Knoten aus mehr oder weniger Enden, die im Anfange gar nicht an einander hängen, zusammengeknüpft seyn kann; wie eine einzige Begebenheit eine Folge von widerley ganz verschiedenen Absichten und Mitteln seyn kann, die anfangs gar nichts miteinander gemein hatten, und die dennoch alle zu gleicher Zeit und durch dieselbe Begebenheit, theils erfüllt, theils umgestossen und vernichtet werden; so kann ein Theaterstück im Anfange aus ganz verschiedenen Handlungen zu bestehen scheinen, welche doch zuletzt in einen Punct oder in einen Knoten zusammenlaufen, und also eine einzige Handlung ausmachen. Ein anders Theaterstück hingegen kann vom Anfange an nur mit einer einzigen Absicht sich beschäftigen, und sich beständig bey ihren Hindernissen und Mitteln aufhalten. Von der ersten Art sind die guten Schauspiele der Engländer, von der andern der Franzosen ihre."¹ As an example of the more complicated type of action, he gives The Constant Couple. Theoretically such an interpretation of unity of action could include the plays of Shakespeare. But unfortunately we do not know whether, since comparing Shakespeare with Gryphius, he had come to appreciate other aspects of the English dramatist than his powers of characterisation. One of the disappointing things about Schlegel is that his later, maturer essays contain no mention of Shakespeare at all. When he refers in the Gedanken to English plays in order to contrast them with those of the French, he has in mind apparently the dramas of Congreve, Steele and Cibber.²

We may say, then, that Schlegel has no wish to dispense with rules. He respects them and is careful to point out that his modification of the imitation theory will not open the gates to a "Feld, wo man ohne Regel herumirren.....wird."³ But he wishes to assign rules to their proper place, to shew that they have only relative value: "Ich will hierdurch die Gewohnheit, die Einheit

1 Ibid., p. 281; Ant., p. 210.

2 His brother Johann Heinrich Schlegel refers to translations of Shakespeare's plays which he found among his papers. This seems to indicate that his interest in Shakespeare had continued.

3 Unähnlichkeit (Werke, III, p. 176; Ant., p. 104).

der Zeit und des Ortes zu beobachten, keineswegs in Verachtung bringen; sondern ich sage es bloss, um einer jeden Regel ihren rechten Wert zu bestimmen, damit man nicht fortfahre, wie viele thun, nach der äusserlichen Form der Schauspiele, ihre innerliche Schönheit zu schätzen."¹ By insisting that inner, casual probability was of far greater importance Schlegel took a great step forward. The probability he demanded was, it is true, of a logical rather than an imaginative or poetic kind. Anachronisms and similar "improbabilities" come in for a good deal of criticism in the earlier essays and he is very cautious of giving too much rein to individual phantasy. But narrow as it may seem to us now, it was far removed from Gottsched's conception of probability; and, by directing attention towards the essentials of drama, it represents the first move towards freedom in the treatment of dramatic material; just as his ability to distinguish between the incidental and essential in the unities, despite his own personal preference for them, opened the gates to a type of drama in which they were not used.

The essence of drama is, then, according to Schlegel, to be sought elsewhere than in external rules. As early as the *Klaj* essay he divided what he called the "rules" of drama into two kinds. "Einige," he said, "fliessen aus dem Begriffe einer menschlichen Handlung." The second kind have to do with the purpose of drama and are concerned with methods of achieving this purpose. These latter rules are in a way arbitrary, in that they depend on the period, the customs of the country, the language, etc.² Here we may note the first step towards a historical view of the varying forms of drama. In the *Gedanken* he makes a similar division, this time calling them internal and external rules. The unities of time and place fall into the group of external rules; their formulation, he says, had been occasioned by conditions of the theatre and the spectators.³

1 *Gedanken* (*Werke*, III, p. 295; *Ant.*, p. 224).

2 *Klajs Herodes* (*Werke*, III, p. 7; *Ant.*, p. 33).

3 *Gedanken* (*Werke*, III, p. 292; *Ant.*, p. 221).

He thus perceives that, while the essence of drama is the same everywhere and at all times, each nation will determine its own particular form. He notes in the Klaj essay that the drama of his own day is, in consequence of changes in customs and manners, in many respects different from that of the Greeks.¹

This feeling that each nation must make the kind of art which best suits its own character and customs goes back a long way; it is present in the letter to his brother when he condemns French intolerance of any kind of drama but their own: "Du musst aber die Alten nicht nach Art des Perrault und anderer Leute beurtheilen, deren Geschmack sich nicht weiter erstreckt, als dass sie die Sitten ihres Volks für die schönsten, die jemals seyn können, oder wohl gar allein für schön achten."² His theory of pleasure naturally inclines him to the view that it is desirable for the reader or spectator to be familiar with the original which the poet has in mind, and in the essay on imitation he assumes that a poet writes primarily for his own nation. We see the influence of this theory still at work in the Gedanken: "In der Wahl der Charaktere hat man am meisten sich nach den Sitten einer jeden Nation zu richten..... Um einer Nation zu gefallen muss man ihr solche Charaktere vorstellen, deren Originale leichtlich bey ihr angetroffen werden. Man findet ein schlechtes Vergnügen an Vorstellungen, deren Originale man nicht kennt.....wenn der Zuschauer zu viel von fremden Sitten erlernen muss, ehe er den Zusammenhang der Verwirrung einsieht, so verliert er die Geduld und das schönste Stück misfällt."³ This is especially true of the comedy so popular at that time, in which the humour chiefly derived from maladjustments in the relation of man to manners. Schlegel attributes the lack of interest aroused by German drama among Germans to the fact that writers were content to imitate the French, and he admonishes Gottsched sharply for his indiscriminate condemnation of the English drama: "Wenn ich dieses in Deutschland schriebe, so würde

1 Klaj's Herodes (Werke, III, p. 7; Ant., p. 33).

2 Über die Trauerspiele der Alten (Werke, III, p. 206; Ant., p. 4).

3 Gedanken (Werke, III, pp. 285 - 287; Ant., pp. 215 - 217). Wolff (op. cit., p. 152) cites this passage from the Gedanken but without connecting it with Schlegel's imitation theory. Yet it is clearly a proof that he was far from rejecting that theory, as Wolff claims.

ich es zugleich in der Absicht sagen, einige eben so verwegene als unwissende Kunstrichter von ihren verkehrten Begriffen zu überführen, da sie ein Theater, welches eine so vernünftige und scharfsinnige Nation mit so vielem Vergnügen besucht,..... und wo man so schöne Abschilderungen der Natur und so bündige Gedanken hört, nämlich das englische Theater, deswegen für schlecht, verwirrt und barbarisch ausgeben, weil es nicht nach dem Muster des französischen eingerichtet ist."¹ He is convinced that "ein Theater, welches gefallen soll, nach den besonderen Sitten und nach der Gemüthsbeschaffenheit einer Nation eingerichtet seyn muss,"² and he warns the actors of the new Danish theatre against slavishly following foreign models: "denn eine jede Nation schreibt einem Theater, das ihr gefallen soll, durch ihre verschiedenen Sitten auch verschiedene Regeln vor."³ This recognition of national diversity in both the content and the form of drama has doubtless a multiplicity of causes. Schlegel's natural tolerance, his conscious lack of chauvinism and his wide first-hand knowledge of different kinds of drama, all play their part in leading him to such a conclusion. But not the least important factor was his ability, manifested from the beginning, to appreciate the essential features of drama and to distinguish these from accidental and transient forms.

The Relation of Character and Action. These essential features of drama were, according to the testimony of his own words, character and action. The relative amount of attention devoted to each is significant. Gottsched was preoccupied with the Fabel and with construction of a very external kind. Schlegel reacts both against Gottsched's theory and against the general practice of concentrating solely on the intrigue, and

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 265; Ant., p. 197.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., p. 262; Ant., p. 194.

stresses character and motivation.¹ These are, it may be noted, not peculiar to drama; they are common also to the epic and to the novel, and there is some justification for doubting whether Schlegel ever had any clear conception of what is essentially dramatic. He often seems to be concerned with delineation of character to the exclusion of movement and climax. In view, however, of the fact that his emphasis on character was a probably conscious reaction - he refers slightly, for instance, to "das unvollkommene Vergnügen, das aus der Verwirrung der Fabel entsteht"² - we must be wary of drawing hasty conclusions. In the essay on Shakespeare and Gryphius he clearly indicates that a series of characterisations, however admirable each in itself may be, does not satisfy his requirements for drama. That he incidentally mistook the unfamiliar construction of Julius Caesar for lack of construction altogether in no way diminishes the value of this statement as evidence that he expected a drama to have shape and cohesion. "Das erste das man bey einem Schauspiele zu beobachten hat, ist die Einrichtung desselben. Aber eben dieses pfleget bey den Engländern insgemein das letzte zu seyn.....Hier denket man so genau nicht an eine Verwirrung, welche am Ende am grössten wird, und die Zuschauer alsdann in die höchsten Leidenschaften stürzt, sondern man sieht dieses mehr als eine Nebensache an, und bemühet sich nur Personen wohl vorzustellen."³ This is the only time that Schlegel puts Einrichtung first; and, even in this essay, it is easy to see how strong was the attraction of powerful characterisation.

1 Cf. letter to Bodmer, 15 April, 1747 (Ständlin, op. cit., p. 46): "Dieses habe ich schon in Leipzig dem Herrn Professor Gottsched öfters gesagt, der nebst dem Zusammenhange der Scenen, welches bei ihm, so viel ich finden können, das vornehmste Stück eines guten Trauerspiels ist, auf die Verwirrung der Fabel ganz allein sahe, und die Charaktere gar vergass."

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 288; Ant., pp. 217, 218).

3 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 42; Ant., p. 78).

What he protested so vigorously against were those plays in which intrigue was piled up and the plot mechanically knotted and unravelled, whilst the characters were allowed to shrink to the proportions of mere puppet figures. Hence his scornful references to "französische Zwischenfabeln" and to "französische Romanverwirrungen". His most outspoken condemnation is to be found in Demokrit. "Ich bewundere dich, Regnard Du bist lobenswerth" remarks Demokrit bitinglly; "Dieses wäre für einen anderen Materie zu drey schlechten Komödien gewesen, und du hast nur eine daraus gemacht."¹ And Regnard is made to admit: "Weil alle diese Geschichte mir angenehm schienen; so brachte ich sie auf das Theater, damit mein Stück lang genug würde."² And, in truth, the plot, as recounted by Schlegel, is bewilderingly lacking in relevance or coherence. One short extract will serve to shew how he was disturbed by the failure to motivate actions or to make one state of mind follow reasonably on another: "Der König bittet den Demokrit, dass er ihm in seiner Liebe behülflich seyn soll. Dieser thut es wirklich. Ungeachtet er aber dadurch so weit gebracht ist, dass er wieder zu sich selbst zu kommen scheint; so räth er dem Thaler, seine Tochter vom Hofe zu nehmen; weil der König sie beschimpfen wollte. Und kaum hat er es gethan; so ist er wieder auf sich selbst erzürnt Cleanthis und Strabo halten eine verliebte Unterredung mit einander. Da sie aber einander um ihre Umstände befragen; So befindet sich, dass Strabo der Cleanthis Mann ist, der vor 20 Jahren von ihr gegangen, und nunmehr hassen sie einander so sehr, als sie einander zuvor liebten."³ Demokrit's repeated whys and wherefores, as he vainly tries to understand the play which Regnard has woven about his name are scarcely surprising. And anything more improbable than this unmotivated transition from love to hate is difficult to imagine.

1 Demokrit (Werke, III, p. 191; Ant., p. 60).

2 Ibid., p. 195; Ant., p. 63.

3 Ibid., pp. 190, 191; Ant., pp. 59, 60.

Although Schlegel deplored the overloading of the action with incident and the wilful complication of it without cause, he was quick to note the undramatic effect of the new German plays whose wordiness could not compensate for the total lack of movement. He is able to distinguish between simplicity of action and lack of action. He praises the comedies of Holberg thus: "Wie sie auf der einen Seite die überhäuften Absichten und Verwirrungen vermeiden, so vermeiden sie auf der andern die Unthätigkeit, da immer eine Scene nach der andern verplaudert, immer von denselben Dingen geredet, und gleichwohl nie etwas gethan wird; welchen Fehler in Sonderheit die meisten, neuen deutschen Originalstücke haben."¹ Action is, then, vitally necessary for drama; but the merely mechanical handling of it, construction in the external sense, can never result in a good play: "Ein Stück, darinnen die Handlung sehr wohl eingerichtet und verwirret ist, kann gleichwohl noch ein elendes Stück seyn, wenn die Wahl und Ausarbeitung der Charaktere.....schwach, sich selbst widersprechend oder gemein sind." The reason for this is simple: "Ein Stück ohne Charaktere ist ein Stück ohne alle Wahrscheinlichkeit, weil die Ursache warum ein Mensch so oder so handelt eben in seinem Charakter liegt."² What relates character and action so intimately is motive. Schlegel conceives the three as interfused and this view, although most forcibly expressed in the Gedanken, dates back to his earliest works. In 1739 he wrote: "Der Philoktetes hat.....die schönste Verwirrung von der Welt", but added immediately: "Alle Zufälle fliessen aus den Charakteren der Personen."³ In the commentary to his translation of Electra he explains that the introduction of a character such as Chrysothemis is valuable because it helps to reveal how directly action issues from character: "denn der Unterschied der Charaktere zeigt sich nicht besser, als wenn zwei Personen in einerley Umständen doch verschiedene Handlungen vornehmen. Die verschiedenen Umstände, darinnen sich die Personen befinden, machen die Verschiedenheit der Charaktere nicht aus, und, wie mich deucht,

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 282; Ant., pp. 211, 212).

2 Ibid., p. 284; Ant., p. 214.

3 Über die Trauerspiele der Alten (Werke, III, p. 209; Ant., p. 6).

ist eine Tragödie, da die Personen durch nichts anders, als durch diese unterschieden sind, eine Tragödie ohne Charaktere."¹
In the Gedanken he expresses his scorn of action which depends on the intriguing of servants rather than on the "Folgen von den Charakteren der Personen."²

This belief in the complete interdependence of character and action does not prevent him from recognising the distinction between pièces de caractère and pièces d'intrigue, which terms he even extends to include tragedy. The distinction, he maintains, refers not so much to the finished play as to the manner of creating it: "Dieses will nicht sagen, als ob ein Schauspiel, darinnen auf die Verwirrung vorzüglich gesehen worden, ohne Charaktere gut seyn könnte; denn das würde eben so viel sagen, als ob der erste Entwurf zu der Erfindung eines Malers.....ein schönes Gemälde wäre. Eine Pièce d'intrigue ist diejenige, wo ich zuerst eine ausserordentliche und sonderbare Begebenheit ausstudiere, und hernach die Charaktere der Personen so darzu erwähle, wie ich sie zur Ausführung dieser Begebenheit nöthig habe.....Bey den pièces de caractère hingegen, wähle ich zuerst den Charakter, den ich ausführen will, und ich sinne hernach auf eine Reihe von Begebenheiten, die diesen Charakter mehr ins Licht setzen."³

But Schlegel has nothing to say about that tension which is essential to drama, about the necessary interplay of opposing forces. Even if we discount the polemic nature of the essay on comedy in verse, the remark which we find there, that a writer of drama in prose is no different from a historian is significant and revealing; for it implies that Schlegel was thinking of drama as representing characters in action, but not necessarily in dramatic action.⁴ His remarks on the way in which the action moves to a climax do not even in the Gedanken rise above the bare commonplaces advanced by Gottsched. On this aspect of drama Schlegel has no more penetrating observation to offer than the stereotyped: "Handlungen, die sich zur Schaubühne schicken, sind solche, die aus Absichten, aus Mitteln, diese Absicht zu erlangen, und aus den Folgen dieser Mittel zusammen-

1 Elektra (Werke, III, p. 419).

2 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 288; Ant., p. 218).

3 Ibid., p. 285; Ant., p. 215.

4 Comödie in Versen (Werke, III, p. 81; Ant., p. 17).

gewebt sind. Die Kunstrichter nennen die Absicht und ihre Mittel die Verwirrung und diejenige endliche Folge, welche entweder die Absicht nebst ihren Mitteln erfüllet, oder sie dergestalt niederreisst, dass ihre Erlangung den handelnden Personen unmöglich gemacht wird, nennen sie die Auflösung."¹

On the other hand, his insight into what constitutes real unity of action was, as we have seen, considerable, and his perception that it depends on the interrelating of the parts was infinitely more fruitful than any glib talk of Haupt-handlung and Nebenhandlungen. His chief strength lies in his clear grasp of the importance of motivation and in his insistence on the closer relation between action and character. If he fails to appreciate the clash and conflict of drama, he yet feels strongly the necessity of making each development follow inevitably on the last, of maintaining thereby the steady onward movement of the action: "Eine wohleingerichtete Handlung soll in jeder Scene von einiger Erheblichkeit einen Schritt weitergehen; entweder einen neuen Umstand erzählen, oder ein neues Hindernis in den Weg legen; eine neue That, oder wenigstens einen neuen Entschluss etwas zu thun veranlassen oder vorstellen."² And if the characters are carefully treated, the action will proceed thus forward of itself, he thinks, since the process is one of relating cause and effect, and the cause, i.e. the motive, lies in the character. In his view, the desired impression of unity depends on the dramatist's power to shew the connection between seemingly unrelated things; and it is this conviction which finally enables him to justify the broader sweep of English drama: "Aus diesem verschiedenen Charakter beyder Nationen rührt es ferner her, dass der Engländer in den Theaterstücken viel Unterredungen leidet, die nur von ferne zur Sache gehören....und, dass der Franzos hingegen bloss mit der Vorstellung der nächsten Umstände seiner Handlung beschäftigt ist. Der Engländer erwuchert dadurch viele kleine Anmerkungen über das menschliche Leben, kleine Scherze, kleine Abschilderungen der Natur, welche der Franzos nicht leichtlich auf sein Theater bringen kann, weil sie nicht geschickt sind, eine wichtige Folge in einer Handlung nach sich zu ziehen, und nur von weitem, und durch Folgen der Folgen damit verknüpft werden können."³

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, pp. 280, 281; Ant., p. 210).

2 Ibid., p. 282; Ant., p. 212.

3 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 263; Ant., p. 195).

Types of Character and Methods of Characterisation

We must now turn to what Schlegel has to say about characters and the way of creating them. It is interesting to see how his ideas on the creation of character fit in with his general theory of imitation. Gottsched deemed the study of moral philosophy a necessary part of the poet's equipment. Nowhere in Schlegel's writings do we find this recommended. He even maintains that in moral philosophy, as opposed to drama, qualities and passions are treated "nur obenhin".¹ In creating his characters, the poet must draw on the knowledge of human nature which he has acquired from his experience of human beings; and it may be noted that Schlegel admires Shakespeare's "tiefere Kenntniss der Menschen," that is, of men in the plural.²

Schlegel was very cautious about what he called "selbst-gemachte Charaktere", for he feared that a poet would run a much greater risk of letting improbabilities slip into his play if he conceived a character in his imagination than if he adhered more or less closely to a chosen model. It would seem that for tragedy the originals were to be historical characters; for comedy, persons of every-day life known to the dramatist. In this raw material he would then make necessary changes, omitting traits which seem irrelevant to his purpose, exaggerating others, even inventing certain characteristics which might fit in well with the whole.

Despite this caution, however, Schlegel had a sneaking admiration for such, "selbstgemachte Charaktere", and this chiefly because they provide opportunities for bold characterisation, for introducing what he calls "verwegne Züge": "Ein selbstgemachter Held," he tells us in the essay on Shakespeare, "wird den grössten Vortheil darinnen haben, dass die Züge desselben viel verwegner und dessen Charakter in der Bildung künstlicher und gefährlicher seyn wird;.... Man findet die Gemüthsbewegungen viel heftiger und ausdrücklicher

1 Ibid., p. 274; Ant., p. 205.

2 Shakespeare und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 60; Ant., p. 92). It is significant that Gottsched uses "man" in the singular, e.g. "Diess ist die nothwendigste Eigenschaft eines Poeten, der theatralische Stücke verfertigen will. Er muss die Moral verstehen, oder den Menschen mit allen seinen verschiedenen Neigungen und Begierden kennen." (C.D., p. 28).

in den Gesichtern abgebildet, die der Maler selbst gedichtet hat"¹
 This admiration for boldness and strength may seem surprising in Schlegel, but it is evidently very real; for it is borne out not only by other remarks in the Shakespeare essay, but by his admiration for such characters as Electra and for Michael in Gryphius' Arminius, by the creation of such a figure as his own Ulfo and, to a lesser extent, of his Dido.

Of Shakespeare's characters Schlegel said: "Der Engelländer hat einen grossen Vorzug in den verwegenen Zügen, dadurch er seine Charaktere andeutet, welchen Vorzug eine Folge der Kühnheit ist, dass er sich unterstanden seine Menschen selbst zu bilden, und welcher wenigstens ein andrer so leicht nicht erlangen wird."² Such characters have one great advantage for the poet, Schlegel thinks; they are more transparent for him, he knows them through and through: "Wir sehen einen Charakter, den wir selbst machen, allezeit vollkommener ein, als einen solchen, den wir aus der Geschichte nehmen."² He gives several examples both from Shakespeare and from Gryphius of these "kühnen und doch sehr nachdrücklichen Zügen eines Charakters,"³ and he, who in contemporary drama was accustomed to an unparalleled dullness due, on the one hand to timidity in characterisation, on the other, to an excessive caution in observing the law of "probability", withholds his approval in respect of one passage only - that in which Caesar challenges danger with the words:

"danger knows full well
 That Caesar is more dangerous than he;
 We are two lions litter'd in one day
 And I the elder and more terrible."

This passage Schlegel condemns.⁴ Otherwise all the characters and emotions, and the way in which they are revealed, command his warm admiration. And this admiration persisted. In the Gedanken he wrote: "Es giebt bey der englischen Nation mehr ausserordentliche und hochgetriebene Charaktere, als bey der französischen. Aus diesem Grunde findet man sie auch häufiger und wunderlicher in ihren Schauspielen, als andern Nationen wahrscheinlich vorkommen würde."⁵

1 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 49; Ant., pp. 83, 84).

2 Ibid., p. 54; Ant., p. 88.

3 Ibid., p. 57; Ant., p. 90.

4 Ibid., p. 57; Ant., p. 89

5 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 264; Ant., p. 196).

Schlegel describes the characters of drama as simple, "ohne Vermischung anderer Tugenden und Laster."¹ We must determine what he actually means by this. It will be remembered that Gottsched advocated simple, "typical" characters and we saw how this conflicted with his general theory of close imitation of nature. Were Schlegel, on the other hand, to demand "types", this would be perfectly consistent with his theory, which demands a modified imitation of nature. But it is by no means certain that typical characters are what he intended, and we can say, without any hesitation at all, that he certainly did not mean the characters of drama to be nothing more than personified vices and virtues. Twice, he emphasises the necessity of introducing finer, subtler traits which harmonise with the main characteristics so that the whole blends into a recognisable individual. The first time he does this is in the early letter to his brother, when he still ranked as a pupil of Gottsched. The passage is that in which he analyses the character of Ulysses: "Die Charaktere, die Sophokles in seinem Philoktetes gebildet hat, sind so unterschieden, als die Personen selbst. Des Ulysses Charakter ist bekannt; aber dennoch hat er auch bey diesem viel Kunst gezeigt. Es ist nicht genug, dass ich von jemandem sage, er sey listig. Ich muss auch wissen, was für Eigenschaften damit verknüpft sind"² The second passage is in the Gedanken. There Schlegel condemns the Italian theatre for the monotony of its stereotyped characters: "Diess hat den Fehler, dass man immer denselben Charakter des Alten Mannes, denselben Charakter des Liebhabers, dieselbe Liebhaberinn, kurz dieselben Personen wieder kommen sieht" But he is equally, if not more, disparaging about those dramatists who are content if they can carry a character through a play without any blatant self-contradiction or discrepancy: "Ein kleiner Geist wird sich begnügen, wenn er nur überhaupt beobachtet, dass er denjenigen, den er erst viel Zaghaftigkeit bezeigen lassen, nicht hernach muthig vorstellt, und dass er den, der sich erst ausserordentlich grausam erwiesen, nicht auf einmal ausserordentlich barmherzig werden lässt."³ This, as we know, represented for Gottsched the peak of successful characterisation; beyond this his aspirations did not go. But, for Schlegel, such uniformity deprived drama of all that was most valuable for both heart and mind, and left it with nothing but "das unvollkommene Vergnügen, das aus der Verwirrung

1 Ibid., p. 272; Ant., p. 204.

2 Über die Trauerspiele der Alten (Werke, III, p. 210; Ant., p. 7).

3 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 288; Ant., p. 217).

der Fabel entsteht." In his view, "die Grösse des Meisters zeigt sich besonders in der Wahl, Verschiedenheit und Feinigkeit, als auch der genauen Bestimmung der Charaktere."¹

This evidence seems to indicate that Schlegel preferred dramatic characters to have that degree of complexity which makes them life-like and human. On the other hand, he did not wish individuals to be transferred directly from real life to the stage with all the mannerisms, idiosyncrasies, habits and traits which are irrelevant and unimportant for the action in hand. Imitation is not to be carried out with such fidelity to detail that the result is blurred. For the function of drama is to throw a spotlight on character so that the outlines and contours of it become clear and distinct. This, we may assume, is the kind of simplicity which Schlegel had in mind when he said that the characters of drama are "simple". As he himself said, the theatre shews us characters in a way we never see them in reality. He was still thinking of the selectivity of art, its power of throwing things into relief; the train of thought is still that of the essay Von der Unähnlichkeit.

Schlegel's views on dramatic characters are then entirely in accordance with his theory of art in general. Even his preference for bold, wild characters, drawn larger than life and without due regard for the canons of probability, is but the translation into dramatic terms of the aesthetic principles expounded in the two essays on imitation. Whatever kind of characters, however, they must be such as will touch the heart of the spectators. For any drama worth the name must succeed in stirring the emotions and the surest way of securing this is to introduce a character with whom and for whom we suffer and hope. This is true for comedy as well as tragedy. Both must contain characters capable of arousing the sympathy of an audience and of winning our affection.²

Of methods of characterisation he has little to say directly. He refers to Shakespeare's practice of putting the analysis of one character into the mouth of another, thus, as it were, clinching the character as we have observed it in action.³ Indirectly, by

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 288; Ant., p. 217).

2 Ibid., pp. 282 - 284; Ant., pp. 212, 213.

3 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 44; Ant., p. 180).

the way he analyses certain characters, Schlegel suggests mainly straightforward, self-explanatory methods. These, as has already been pointed out, he whole-heartedly approved, maintaining that the characters of tragedy in particular should be fully aware of what they are doing and why, and able to give expressions to this awareness. Yet he is aware of significant details which might be overlooked by a less sensitive mind, and which imply less obvious methods of characterisation. In the letter to his brother at the end of his analysis of the character of Ulysses, he writes: "Ich würde nicht fertig werden, wenn ich alles sagen wollte, was zum Beweise dienet, wie künstlich die Verschlagenheit des Ulysses mit den anderen Eigenschaften, die bey der List sich zu finden pflegen, von dem Dichter verknüpft worden sey. Eines aber kann ich nicht unbemerkt lassen. Da Philoktetes einen Pfeil auflegt, nach ihm zu schiessen, so ist er von dem Theater hinweg, ohne dass gemeldet wird, wie er davon weggekommen; wodurch der Poet zu erkennen giebt, wie heimlich er sich weggestohlen haben müsse."¹

In the analysis of emotion Schlegel shews considerable perception and delicacy. He notes the greater effectiveness which Shakespeare achieves by varying the emotional intensity, letting passages of high tension alternate with those in which it is considerably relaxed or even totally absent. Gryphius he criticises "weil er alles zu Gemüthsbewegungen machen will, und dadurch, wenn die Materie dazu zu schwach ist, in etwas übersteigendes und lächerliches fällt."² Much depends, he thinks, in the treatment of emotional states, on the order and sequence of the thoughts by means of which the character conveys his feelings to the reader or spectator. "Die Stärke und Schwäche der Gemüthsbewegungen auch der Unterschied derselben stammt oft nur aus einer andern Verbindung und Ordnung der Gedanken her." He illustrates this by an example from Opitz' translation of The Trojan Women:

"Andromacha z. E. redet bloss bittweise und in einer demüthigen Erniedrigung, wenn sie, um ihren Sohn vom Tode zu erretten, saget:

1 Über die Trauerspiele der Alten (Werke, III, p. 211; Ant., p. 8).

2 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 59; Ant., p. 91).

seyn kann."¹ With this he moves away from the conventional and cautious Gottsched and approaches the more adventurous spirit of the Swiss.

Despite the accusations of sententiousness made against Schlegel, he was, as we have seen, averse to the introduction of any thought, however noble or fine in itself, if it does not serve the general purpose of the action, or if it conflicts with the character of the person who is made to utter it. He thinks of the various parts of drama as growing one out of the other, and he will not, in theory, tolerate any inorganic excrescence, however beautiful or arresting. He is equally intolerant of the use of euphemistic forms to express ordinary everyday things: "Es würde ein unnatürlicher Zwang seyn, und der Majestät des Trauerspiels zuwider lauffen, wenn man sich bemühen wollte, Sachen mit einer ausgesuchten Art vorzutragen, welche nicht verdienen, dass ein erhabner Verstand sich dabey aufhalte, und die man nur deswegen sagt, weil es nöthig ist, sie zu wissen. Sachen, bey denen es nichts zu denken giebt, kann man niemals zu kurz sagen..... Ein Held wird in einem Trauerspiele, wenn es die Umstände erfordern, einem andern sagen können: Setze dich. Kaum wird es sich schicken zu sagen; lass dich nieder, und noch weniger: beliebt dir, dich zu setzen."²

This is paralleled by an equally healthy preference for simplicity in expressing emotions: "Der Vers des Racine:

Ecoutez, Bajazet, je sens que je vous aime

kann durch die allerwohlausgesonnenste Redensart nicht ersetzt werden, wenn man gleich die Stricke, die Ketten, die Kerzen und die Flammen der Liebe auf einen Haufen zusammenbrächte, um dieses auf eine recht neue Art auszudrücken."³ Schlegel's unmistakable love of Racine is the best testimony to his good taste,⁴ and this ability to combine sublime majesty with the most moving simplicity is what he most appreciates in him. When he looks for a passage in Racine to illustrate what he means by Würde und Majestät, he expressly takes one "die gegen andere gehalten, nur ganz wenig Zierrathen hat, damit man mir nicht vorwerfen dürfe, dass ich in dem Ausdrücke der Trauerspiele etwas allzu gekünsteltes verlange, welcher Vorwurf dem

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 161; Ant., pp. 159, 160).

2 Würde und Majestät (Werke, III, p. 232; Ant., pp. 182, 183).

3 Ibid., p. 234; Ant., p. 185.

4 Ibid., p. 230; Ant., p. 181: "Ich kann mich auf keine grössere Erfahrung berufen als eben auf die Phädra des Racine"

Racine niemals mit Recht gemacht werden können."¹

Simplicity is, then, to be the keynote of language in drama. Simplicity and clarity. But not clarity in the merely logical sense of the word. That is insufficient. For what is required is not merely intellectual comprehension but a vivid appeal to the imagination. Hence Schlegel asserts: "Die grösste Undeutlichkeit aber ist die Mattigkeit in einem Gedichte. Denn die Mattigkeit ist nichts anders, als ein Mangel derjenigen Dinge, welche die Bilder in der Einbildungskraft lebhaft machen. Wenn aber die Bilder nicht lebhaft sind, wie können sie deutlich seyn?"² Although sensitively aware of the indefinable quality which is required to make language vivid, moving and noble, he cannot, of course, define it and has to be content with calling it "ein gewisser Schwung". "Gleichwohl kann ein Trauerspiel, welches alle dergleichen Redensarten vermeidet, noch immer ganz platt seyn, wenn nicht noch besonders eine Haupteigenschaft dazu kommt, welche bey nahe alles das übrige in sich schliesset, nemlich ein gewisser Schwung eine Art oder wie es die Franzosen nennen ein tour, den man der Rede giebt Eine Rede kann in ganz niedrigen und einfaltigen Worten bestehen, aber eben dieser Schwung machet diese Niedrigkeit und Einfalt edel und unterscheidet sie von einer kriechenden und matten Niedrigkeit."³

The Genres

In the way in which he divides drama into genres, Schlegel represents a distinct advance over Gottsched in two respects; firstly by making the basis of his division not merely the rank of the persons in the play, but the emotional response evoked in the spectator; secondly, by his refusal to exclude any kind of play from the category of comedy. Under this general heading he is willing to include anything, even the broadest kind of farce, thus widening considerably the conception of legitimate comedy. This was an apparently conscious gesture, for he says in the Gedanken: "Ich habe es desto nöthiger gefunden, die grosse Mannichfaltigkeit der Natur, und also auch den reichen Ueberfluss, der dem Theater durch diese Mannichfaltigkeit zuwächst, deutlich

1 Ibid., p. 222; Ant., p. 174.

2 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 140; Ant., p. 139).

3 Würde und Majestät (Werke, III, p. 229; Ant., p. 180).

aus einander zu setzen; weil es viele giebt, die nur von einer einzigen Art der Komödie einen Begriff haben, und die alles, was nicht nach derselben Art ist, als schlecht und unregelmässig verwerfen, wenn gleich der Poet darinnen der Natur auf dem Fusse gefolgt wäre."¹ This brings us again to the paradox which we noted earlier. Schlegel, who so forcefully emphasised the non-naturalistic aspect of art, who accepted conventions and form and refused to judge those by criteria of probability, yet was willing, within the form, to accept the whole of nature, including aspects of it which Gottsched uncompromisingly rejected. Within the limits which art by its very nature imposes, Schlegel expects drama to be natural and life-like. Gottsched, despite his hankering after a faithful imitation even in matters of form where art must differ from reality, expects drama to ignore whole aspects of nature and to be governed by narrowly bourgeois standards of propriety and convention.

By considering, firstly, whether a play arouses laughter or serious emotions and, secondly, whether the persons in it are characters of high or low rank, Schlegel arrives at the following subdivisions of drama: tragedy, which evokes serious emotions and in which the persons are of noble rank, and comedy. Under comedy he reckons: 1. those plays which arouse laughter and in which the persons are of noble rank; 2. those which arouse serious emotions and in which the persons are of low rank; 3. those in which the persons are of low rank but which evoke laughter; and 4. those in which the persons are of high or low rank or both and which evoke both laughter and serious emotion.² The last-named class clearly allows for the comédie larmoyante while the second class of "comedy" might well serve as a definition for the bürgerliches Trauerspiel, but it is doubtful whether he really had such a possibility in mind. As examples of this group, he gives pastorals and de la Chaussee's comédie larmoyante La Gouvernante. Schlegel is of the opinion that all these kinds of drama should have a place in the repertoire of the theatre and he adds; "Wir würden der Natur Unrecht thun, und die Zuschauer eines Vergnügens berauben, wenn wir eine von diesen Arten der Handlungen vom Theater ausschliessen wollten."²

1. Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 278; Ant., p. 208).

2. Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 276; Ant., p. 207).

Tragedy

The subject of tragedy is, according to Schlegel, "die unglücklichen Zufälle der Grossen und die Schicksale des Staates."¹ He does not exclude love as a possible theme, but in reaction against its predominance in French plays, he is frequently ironical about it; and he notes that Shakespeare and Gryphius have both shewn that fine scenes can be made without mention of love. In the Gedanken he suggests as possible themes the treatment of sorrow, friendship, anger, ambition, revenge.²

If we ask what he considers to be the purpose of tragedy we find that, while his views are more or less consistent throughout, he makes no attempt to probe deeply into the problem. In the Shakespeare essay he chooses the following formula: "In den Zuschauern edle Regungen und Leidenschaften vermittelst der Nachahmung zu erwecken."³ Later he says that the aim of tragedy is "die Erweckung und Verbesserung der menschlichen Leidenschaften;"⁴ and again, in the Gedanken "die Erregung der Leidenschaften".⁵ Thus the arousing of emotion is throughout a constant feature. In the Gedanken ~~where~~ Schlegel mentions that "Bewunderung" may facilitate the arousing of emotion and, since one is more likely to marvel at what is strange, this is an argument in favour of going to the history of foreign lands for themes and sources.⁶

These remarks are all that Schlegel has to say about the effect of tragedy. Improvement is mentioned only once and he does not at any time venture to suggest how, or by what means, such improvement is effected. Thus he avoids - whether deliberately or not it is impossible to say - any discussion of catharsis. Any positive views which he may have held as to the way in which the purging of the emotions takes place, are unknown to us. From his vigorous rejection of Gottsched's theory that a tragedy must illustrate some given moral truth, however, we may assume that he did not conceive

1 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 43; Ant., p. 80).

2 Ibid., Cf. Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 267; Ant., p. 199).

3 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 60; Ant., p. 92).

4 Würde und Majestät (Werke, III, p. 217; Ant., p. 169).

5 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 267; Ant., p. 198).

6 Ibid., p. 287; Ant., p. 216.

the effect of tragedy as a narrowly moral one, working through the blatant channels of example and precept. For Gottsched, each tragedy, using as its whip fear of the consequences, was expected to effect direct and concrete moral improvement. For Schlegel the effect is much less tangible than that. It takes place somehow through the emotions experienced by us as we witness the emotions of the people of the play. A passage in the Gedanken seems to point to such an interpretation: "Es ist genug, wenn der Poet weis, dass er in seinem Werke Gelegenheit hat, der Sittenlehre Dienst zu thun. Und der dramatische Poet hat diese Gelegenheit besonders durch eine genaue und feine Abschilderung der Gemüther und Leidenschaften."¹

Before he wrote the essay on imitation Schlegel thought that the purpose of tragedy was to arouse emotions, and he still held this view afterwards. There would thus seem no reason to imagine that he himself felt this to be in conflict with his general statement that imitation affords pleasure. And there is, of course, nothing incompatible in the two statements that art in general gives satisfaction and that tragedy gives rise to painful emotions. For the arousing of these emotions is the particular method by which tragedy, as a form of art, achieves an effect which is characteristic of art in general. Schlegel was very well aware that the emotions aroused by tragedy, however painful, are not actually unpleasant, and he realised that what is necessary to ensure the desired experience is a certain predisposition which has to be acquired. Protesting against the objection that tragedy makes the spectators sad, he says: "Gesetzt auch man fühle bey dem ersten Trauerspiele so viel, dass man selbst die erregte Leidenschaft unangenehm fände, so würde es damit, wie mit den besten Speisen gehen, die der Zunge anfangs nicht angenehm sind, weil sie dieselbe zu stark angreifen, und die doch hernach desto besser schmecken."² This statement would seem finally to remove all reason for thinking that Schlegel's greater insistence on the emotional effect of drama in the later essays implied a rejection of the theory of aesthetic pleasure which he had put forth five years earlier.³

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, pp. 271, 272; Ant., pp. 202, 203).

2 Ibid., p. 267; Ant., p. 199.

3 Cf. above p. 70 note 3.

Comedy

Under the category^{of} comedy Schlegel included plays which do not evoke laughter. But that was merely a question of nomenclature and what we are concerned with in this section is comedy in the ordinary sense of the term. His organic view of drama is especially noticeable in his treatment of comedy. As we saw, he did not think of the language of drama as a separate problem; it was to grow naturally out of character. Fine thoughts and phrases which give the impression of having been inserted for their own sake and had little relation to action or character were rejected as unsuitable excrescences. So in comedy, *bons mots*, turns of phrase, witty in themselves, but not expressive of the character who utters them, are thought to be out of place.¹ His insistence on character as the most important feature of drama led him to maintain that it should be the basis of comedy, and the comic was to grow directly out of it. This was why he ridiculed the use of the traditional comic servant, the counterpart of the modern music-hall "stooge"; for he felt that this figure could only afford the merely mechanical humour of repartee, and could never give rise to really great comedy of the universal type.

Great comedy, he thought, must have a general appeal. Hence the comic element should not depend on the understanding and appreciation of very special customs. The comic, both of character and action, should have its cause and explanation in general humanity. Another characteristic of great comedy is that it always has an emotional appeal. Schlegel's general statements about drama - that the characters must win our sympathy and that "*eine Handlung ohne Leidenschaften ist keine Handlung*" - apply equally to comedy. Our laughter must always be tinged with a certain emotion. In this connection Schlegel pays a warm tribute to Moliere, who, as he observes, knew how to do this better than anyone else: "*Zuweilen ist das Lächerliche mit den Leidenschaften so sehr vermischt, dass beydes zugleich erregt wird. Eine Probe hiervon hat man an dem Geizigen des Molière, da ihm sein Geldkasten genommen worden. Der arme Schelm erwecket sodann Mitleiden und Lachen zugleich. Molière hat überhaupt diese Kunst unvergleichlich verstanden; und Arnolf in der Schule des Frauenzimmers, da er auf die letzt rasend verliebt wird, ist gleichfalls ein Beispiel davon.*"² While then the comic is incompatible with tragedy, because

1 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 291; Ant., p. 220).

2 Ibid., p. 284; Ant., p. 213.

he thinks that anything which tends to provoke laughter will ruin the effect, the more serious emotions are by no means excluded from comedy: "Wenn aber die Erregung des Lachens der Hauptzweck ist, so wird die Erweckung der Leidenschaften nicht gänzlich ausgeschlossen, sondern vielmehr ein gewisses Maass davon in den mehresten Fällen zuträglich, ja fast nothwendig sey."¹

Despite these two points of advance towards an understanding of the essentials of great comedy - Schlegel has little understanding of the comic as such. The purpose of comedy is to improve and to instruct.² From his, as from Gottsched's writings, one concludes that comedy has a far more purgative effect than tragedy. It should help to preserve us from faults of demeanour, from pomposity and all kinds of offensive mannerisms in our everyday life. Although he rejects satire of the biting, wounding kind and thinks it unsuitable for comedy, he has no conception of any comedy other than the satirical kind. He appears to conceive of no intermediate stage between a somewhat shamefaced outburst of laughter in spite of oneself and the quiet smile which lingers and returns. And since pleasure diminishes when one has to laugh against one's will, loud laughter is incompatible with aesthetic appreciation. Comedy as an art should evoke only a smile: "Man muss bedenken, dass auch wohl der allergesetzteste Mensch sich oft wird nicht enthalten können, über ungereimte und grobe Dinge zu lachen, wofern sie sehr possierlich sind; aber dass auch er der erste seyn wird, der sich schämt, gelacht zu haben, und dass sein Vergnügen nicht gross seyn kann, da er wider seinen Willen gelacht hat. Ein Scherz hingegen, der Wahrheit und Feinigkeit in sich hält, ist gerade derjenige, welcher gesetzten Leuten das meiste Vergnügen erweckt; denn er kitzelt so lange und so oft, als man daran denkt."³

One penetrating remark about comedy must not go unmentioned. Schlegel wishes to define the limits of the comic, to determine the point beyond which it may not go without stepping into the realm of madness and insanity: "Diese Gränzen lassen sich vielleicht durch folgende Regel bestimmen. Ein Mensch, der noch weis, was er thut, und der also nur thöricht und nicht närrisch ist, wird niemals etwas unternehmen, wodurch er sich selbst als ein Narr vorkommen muss. Er macht sich vielmehr in seinem Verstande gewisse Grundsätze, die seiner Thorheit gemäss sind, und durch welche er sie so beschönigt, dass er

1 Ibid., p. 277; Ant., p. 207. Cf. p. 283; Ant., p. 213: "Eine Komödie, so sehr es ihre Absicht und Bestimmung ist, Lachen zu erwecken, muss doch allezeit mit Erregung einiger Leidenschaften vermischt seyn."

2 Ibid., pp. 279, 280; Ant., pp. 208, 209. Cf., too, pp. 268, 269; Ant., pp. 199, 200.

3 Ibid., p. 268; Ant., p. 200.

sich noch klug denken kann. So lange seine Handlungen unter diese Grundsätze gebracht werden können, so lange ist der Charakter noch nicht zu weit getrieben."¹

The Relation of Drama and History

Schlegel's treatment of this question is to some extent determined by his imitation theory. At the time of writing the Shakespeare essay he is anxious that any obvious discrepancy between a drama and its historical source should be avoided. The English claim that Shakespeare created his own characters. Nevertheless, the mark of his success is that the finished products closely resemble their originals in history: "Man sieht, dass diese Charaktere alle eine ziemlich grosse Aehnlichkeit mit den historischen Charaktern haben, ob gleich Shakespear, nach dem Urtheile der Engelländer, seine Menschen selber gemacht hat. Dieses ist eine grosse Regel für diejenigen, welche ein gleiches wagen wollen. Man kann den Charakter einer Person, die in der Historie bekannt ist, zwar in etwas ändern, und entweder höher treiben, oder etwas weniger von seinen Tugenden und Lastern in ihm abbilden, als die Geschichte ihm zuschreibt. Aber wenn man weiter gehen wollte, so würde man mit seiner Menschenmacherey mehr zum Romanenschreiber als zum Dichter werden"² Although minor changes do not matter, these should be done very skilfully, and this is a virtue in Shakespeare which he must enthusiastically admire - that he is able to invent traits which blend so completely with the character that we are not concerned about their historical authenticity at all. Having described some such traits, he continues: "Wir reden von diesen Umständen ohne Absicht, ob sie aus den Geschichten entnommen sind oder nicht. Denn wenn sie daraus genommen sind, so ist es künstlich, sie mit demjenigen, was man selbst erfindet, zusammenzusetzen, und wenn sie nicht daraus genommen sind: so ist es künstlich solche Dinge zu erfinden, die sich zu demjenigen, was man aus den Geschichten erzählet, genau schicken."³

Quite clearly, then, at this stage similarity with the historical original is the most important thing. There seems to be no clear

1 Ibid., p. 290; Ant., pp. 219, 220.

2 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, p. 48; Ant., p. 82).

3 Ibid., p. 58; Ant., p. 90.

distinction in his mind between the function of the dramatist and that of the historian. In the letter to his brother he describes the task of the latter as follows: "Es ist die Natur der Menschen, dass sie nach ihren Charakteren handeln. Diejenigen also, die uns die Ursachen der Handlungen entdecken wollen, wie solches die Pflicht eines Geschichtschreibers ist, müssen uns nothwendig die Charaktere derer entdecken, welche Theil daran gehabt haben. Weil sie aber wahre Handlungen erzählen, so werden wir ihren Charakteren desto sicherer trauen und dieselben nachmachen können"¹ while in the essay on comedy in verse he says of the dramatist: "Der Verfertiger einer prosaischen Comödie scheint uns nur ein Geschichtschreiber zu seyn"² We must, of course, make allowances for the polemic nature of this latter essay with its inevitable exaggerations. But it is nevertheless fairly clear that Schlegel at this stage was not very certain about the function of the dramatist.

But his attitude to historical drama was as much determined by contemporary conditions as by his imitation theory. It is a reaction, and a justifiable reaction, against the practice of using historical names to give as it were the stamp of respectability to a drama, to ensure its acceptance by the critics and by the public. Such dramas had often, both as regards plot and characterisation, so little foundation in historical fact that it seemed as though the historical labels had been quite arbitrarily attached to what was otherwise pure fiction, and one was constrained to ask why these labels had been chosen in preference to any others. Whatever we may think of Schlegel's general views on historical drama, the validity of his protest against such plays as Regnard's *Démocrate* cannot be denied. As Schlegel convincingly shews, this *Démocrate* has little in common with his historical counterpart, and the shade of Aristophanes comes very near the mark when he says to Regnard: "Du machtest ja ein Hirngespinnste lächerlich und nicht den Demokritus Du hättest also zu deinem Endzwecke einen anderen Philosophen entweder suchen, oder dichten sollen."³ Schlegel does not wish to deprive poets of the "Freiheit zu dichten", but certain parallels must exist to justify the choice of these particular names and of that particular milieu. The key to the attack on *Démocrate* is to be found in a passage of the Shakespeare essay: "Man wird mir erlauben, dass ich, um den Werth dieser Tugend

1 Über die Trauerspiele der Alten (Werke, III, p. 210; Ant., p. 7).

2 Comodie in Versen (Werke, III, p. 81; Ant., p. 17).

3 Demokrit (Werke, III, p. 194; Ant., pp. 62, 63).

des Shakespear recht in das Licht zu setzen, eine Ausschweifung auf andre Nationen mache, welche sich zuweilen nicht undeutlich zu rühmen scheinen, dass ihre theatralischen Personen zwar die Namen der historischen Personen führen, aber von jenen ganz unterschieden sind. Denn sind es Namen, die in der Historie bekannt sind; so wird einem Zuschauer, der nicht ungelehrt ist, indem er diesen Namen hört, auch dieser Charakter beyfallen. Und an statt, dass er ein Vergnügen über die Aehnlichkeit, die der nachgeahmte Held mit dem wahren hat, empfinden sollte; so wird er ein Misvergnügen über die Unähnlichkeit dieser beyden Helden empfinden. Dieses wird nicht so leicht geschehen wenn der Charakter in den Hauptumständen ähnlich, und nur in Nebenumständen verändert wird."¹

In the two essays on imitation, in which Schlegel achieves a clearer understanding of the function of art, and shews that it does not merely imitate, but selects, intensifies and throws into relief, he comes to realise the distinction between the aim of the artist and that of the historian² and the difference in aim means, as he shews in the course of the two essays, a difference in procedure. Consequently when he returns to the problem of drama and history in the Gedanken, we find him able to state precisely wherein the function of the dramatist differs from that of the historian. He now definitely advises the poet against sticking too closely to the historical source. The dramatist has to supplement history, to provide motivation in a way which the historian cannot do: "Sich bloss an die Geschichte zu halten ist nicht rathsam, weil diess eine gewisse Trockenheit verursacht. Der Geschichtschreiber erzählt die Dinge nur mit denjenigen Ursachen, die er gewusst hat Der Poet soll die Handlung mit ihren zureichenden Ursachen vorstellen."³ He thus comes to see that truth of character is more important than truth of fact. The distinction between Schlegel and Gottsched appears as sharply marked here as anywhere. For Gottsched the historian related the bare facts and the dramatist supplied a moral bias. For Schlegel the dramatist must supply an artistic bias.

1 Shakespear und Gryph (Werke, III, pp. 48, 49; Ant., p. 83).

2 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 132; Ant., p. 131).

3 Gedanken (Werke, III, p. 287; Ant., p. 216).

Conclusion

The thing that strikes us most forcibly when we turn from the Critische Dichtkunst and the Beiträge, to the writings of Johann Elias Schlegel, is that we are now dealing with someone for whom literature lives. He has an openness of interest which gives him the power of directly appreciating great art in various forms. Although he has only the faintest glimmering of wherein lies the true greatness of Shakespeare, he yet shews warm appreciation of the life and vigour of a play such as Julius Caesar, not only before its author became generally known and popular in Germany, but at a time when he was definitely condemned by authority. And what are the other names which recur most frequently in the pages of Schlegel's works? They are those of the Greek dramatists, of Racine and Molière. And to each of them his reaction is one of warm response to greatness, not of cold reserve which issues in pettifogging criticism of details. Such literature cannot, he feels, be created, appreciated or judged by the mechanical application of rules. Gottsched's conception of the poet as a Seiltänzer who performs a ticklish feat as he juggles with rhyme and rhythm, his glory increasing with increasing odds, is never remotely suggested in Schlegel's writings. When he speaks of rules and verse, it is not as of an uncomfortable taskmaster, with whom one must try to effect a compromise. They are, for him, the poet's medium and craft.

If this is his attitude to individual works, it is in somewhat the same spirit that he approaches the problem of art as a whole. And here the true significance of his thought appears, in his actual realisation of the existence of a problem; not the merely technical problems which troubled and absorbed Gottsched; but a problem of the most fundamental kind. What is the relation of art to nature? This is the question he continually asks himself. And his answer is, that art is an imitation of nature. But how close shall this imitation be? In what terms shall we judge art? It is to prevent the loose use of the terms natural and unnatural, and to determine the limits of the much-vaunted probability, that he submits the principle of imitation to closer scrutiny.¹ And if Schlegel, although so often insisting on the value of feeling and experience in the appreciation and understanding of art, demands more than "geübtes Gefühl" in defining the scope of

1 Nachahmung (Werke, III, p. 107; Ant., p. 106): "Eine genauere Untersuchung des Begriffs von der Nachahmung habe ich seit langer Zeit für eine Sache gehalten, welche unentbehrlich ist, wenn man in der Dichtkunst mehr mit Gründen behaupten, als nach eigenem Gutdünken und nach einem geübten Gefühle entscheiden will. Man kann nicht eher überzeugend wissen, ob man etwas mit Recht natürlich oder unnatürlich nenne; ja mich dünket, man kann die Grenzen der Wahrscheinlichkeit nicht eher gewiss bestimmen, als bis man erst diesen Begriff auf das genaueste bestimmt hat."

imitation, we may take it that this was due to the menace of those who so glibly condemned many great literary works as unnatural and improbable. There are, and probably always will be, people who apply such criteria indiscriminately to art; but the offenders at that time in Germany were the very protagonists and would-be founders of a national literature. It was the official view against which Schlegel felt constrained to make a stand, and he rightly thought that a protest based on personal feeling alone would carry little weight or conviction.

But, despite this recourse to dialectic, his approach remains the very opposite of Gottsched's. Since the latter proceeds from principles on which he rigidly insists, he is forced into a critical attitude towards literature. Faced with any particular work, he must always ask whether it conforms to those principles which he has established as unassailable. Schlegel, by nature more impressionable, and deeply moved by great literature, makes his point of departure the works themselves. He does not assail the principle of imitation, but he examines it in the light of literature which he loves and admires. For this literature exists, it has moved many people before him and now moves him. Why then test its value by asking whether it conforms to a principle which was only established after observation of existing works of art? He would rather test the value of the principle by asking what light literature can throw upon it.

CHAPTER III

SCHLEGEL'S PRINCIPLES IN THE LIGHT OF LATER
DEVELOPMENTS IN AESTHETICS

I

Since Schlegel's approach to art and his understanding of its relation to reality were aesthetically far more valid than Gottsched's, it must at first sight seem surprising that his views and suggestions remained without direct results. But, although there may have been far greater value in the small compass of Schlegel's writings, Gottsched was in a position to wield far greater influence. His authority was unique. Other factors too played a part in minimising any chances which Schlegel's ideas might have had of exerting influence on contemporary thought. He was no pioneer in the spectacular sense; his was a persuasive rather than a fighting nature, and he lacked that talent for one-sidedness which is so much an asset in defending any cause with conviction. Moreover he was not sufficiently a creative dramatist to clinch his precepts by example. True his life falls before the war which brought content and stimulus to German poets; but it is doubtful whether he was sufficiently master of the art of dialogue ever to have become a dramatist of the first rank. But by far the most important reason for the lack of interest aroused by his theories is the form in which they appeared. Despite inner coherence and unity of direction, outwardly they were not systematised. His idea of writing a "theatralische Dichtkunst" based on his principle of modified imitation was unfortunately never carried out,¹ and the suggestions for the newly-opened Danish theatre which temporarily took its place, although completely in tune with his general aesthetic, bear the unmistakable mark of having been written in response to an immediate practical need. And they were not published until nearly twenty years after his death! The fate of those articles and essays which were published during his lifetime is, however, not more enviable. For almost all of them appeared, scattered here and there, in Gottsched's periodicals - not precisely the best position from which to exert an influence which pointed in diametrically the opposite direction to that of the editor. But for a time it was the only door open to Schlegel. The

1 Cf. letter to Bodmer, 18 September, 1747, published by J. Crüger in Archiv für Literaturgeschichte, Bd. XIV, Leipzig, 1886.

long essay on imitation suffered particularly from these unfavourable opportunities for reaching the public. The first section of it appeared in the Critische Beyträge; then Gottsched quite arbitrarily split the second section into two, publishing part of it in a later number of the Beyträge and retaining the other part so long that Schlegel feared he must have found some heresy in it and was not going to let it appear at all.¹ The remaining paragraphs did, however, finally appear two years later, - but in a different periodical! A closely-knit argument severed thus limb from limb and appearing at such intervals could not hope to make a coherent impression, let alone exert influence. By the time Schlegel's theories did appear in convenient form, in the third volume of the collected works (1764), there was a new tang in the air and a different critical jargon prevailed. His formula was, in fact, out of date, and for the full force of his ideas to be released, they needed to be re-expressed, as they undoubtedly would have been re-expressed had he lived.

It is certain that Schlegel's theoretical works were known to later writers - Lessing and Mendelssohn both acknowledge this - and they may even have been known before the appearance of the collected works. Nevertheless, to speak of "influence" in the case of ideas which had been overtaken before they became generally accessible is dangerous. And, in any case, to say that one writer influenced another is not in itself very interesting. The interesting thing is to see precisely how the influence was effected and what were its results. If this cannot be done, tracing influences is as idle and unprofitable as tracing sources. The similarity of an odd sentence may always be a proof of influence in that the author in question may have read it and it may have lingered in his mind. But no number of similarly worded sentences are proof of influence if the general trend of an author's argument or approach ultimately differs from that of his source. (Were this not so, it would be easy enough to prove that that most unlikely book, Gottsched's Critische Dichtkunst was the "source" of many things written later in the century!) This is above all true in writing about aesthetics, where the test of validity is always one of approach and never of what is said. Two sentences may be almost identical in wording, and yet the one, by its slight variation, may fall completely out of the aesthetic sphere, while the other remains well within it. Or again, a single sentence taken out of its

1 Cf. letter to Bodmer, 19 April, 1746, Ständlin, op. cit.

context may appear to be aesthetically quite valid, whereas, read within that context, it is at once seen to possess no aesthetic value at all. The sentence from Fraguier cited by Antoniewicz on page XXXIX of his introduction to Schlegel's Schriften seems to me at least as close, if not closer, to Gottsched's description of the poet¹ as to anything Schlegel ever said; while the general trend of Fraguier's argument in the article² from which the sentence is taken is so totally different from Schlegel's thesis that there can be no question of its having influenced the latter's thought, however much odd sentences from the French may have echoed in his ears and perhaps stimulated him to his own train of thought. But if tracing sources and influences on these lines is unprofitable, arguing with other critics about them is more so! And the interesting and important thing is not so much where Schlegel got his ideas, but what he made of them.

There is little doubt that he knew the writings of the members of the Académie and that he was also stimulated by the ideas of Bodmer and Breitinger. But no member of the Académie touches on so many problems of art with the same consistently aesthetic approach. And certainly no German before Schlegel did it. It is just this aesthetic approach which distinguishes him from Gottsched and makes him able to appreciate his sources, and select from them, and weld them into a whole which is informed throughout by his own personal view of art.

It is even true that a large part of what Schlegel says is what Gottsched had already said before him. And yet just this very fact is the most convincing proof of Schlegel's superiority, of his power, and Gottsched's failure, to understand and appreciate art. For what Schlegel does is not only to maintain a point of view consistently - for example, the demand that drama must move the spectators, whereas Gottsched supports this demand once, under the influence of Horace, and frequently denies it elsewhere - but he finds for his opinions and suggestions reasons which are aesthetic, not practical. That is to say, when talking about art, he remains, with few exceptions, within the sphere of art. A dawning sense of the aesthetic distinguishes him from his master even when he is close. Schlegel was not the first to point

1 C.D., p. 94.

2 Qu'il ne peut y avoir des Poèmes en Prose. Mémoires de Littérature tirez des registres de l'Académie royale des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres, Paris, 1717 ff. Tome 6, pp. 266 ff.

out that good plays can be written on themes other than love. Gottsched had said it before him.¹ But the matter takes on a different aspect when we realise that Gottsched made this remark in an attack on opera, of whose moral influence he was highly suspicious, whereas Schlegel's criticism is directed against the use of the love-theme in many French plays; and he does not reject the theme if it is used as bona-fide dramatic material, but only its unwarranted introduction as an easy mechanical means of complicating the intrigue, which is dramatically a perfectly legitimate objection. Again, in his views on comedy, Schlegel only diverges from Gottsched at two points, but they are significant ones. Gottsched consistently maintained that comedy may not move the spectators or it will defeat its own ends, for as soon as we feel with the characters we cease to laugh at them. Schlegel, on the other hand, perceived that great comedy must touch the heart of the spectators, which is significant, for soon afterwards the first great German comedy does so tenderly touch the heart. And Gottsched thought that improvement ensued from watching comedy because the spectator identified himself with the comic character, resolving never to be in the same undignified position himself. Schlegel describes the spectator of comedy as watching with amused composure and denies that he identifies himself with any of the characters in the play. And to thus identify oneself, certainly to the point of taking a resolve, as Gottsched suggests, is totally incompatible with aesthetic appreciation, which is not active but contemplative.

The purpose of this chapter is, then, to trace, not influences, but rather the lines of Schlegel's spiritual kinship with other German writers of the eighteenth century, and at the same time to estimate the value of his principles in the light of later developments in aesthetics.

It is as a pioneer in the forward movement of German drama that he has usually been seen and in this connection his kinship with Lessing has constantly, and quite rightly, been stressed.² Clearly his insistence on native themes - without excluding others if they

1 C.B., vol. 3, p. 298.

2 Franz Mayer (Ein Vorläufer Lessings. Viertes Programm des nieder-österreich. Landesrealgymnasiums in Oberhollabrunn, 1869) listed points in which Schlegel foreshadows Lessing. Later critics added to these and enlarged upon them. Recently a dissertation with a similar title was accepted by the University of California; C. E. Borden, J. E. Schlegel als Vorläufer G. E. Lessings, 1937. Unfortunately I have not seen this.

have a sufficiently universal appeal - removes him from Gottsched, who would only admit subjects from ancient history and saga for tragic treatment, and brings him nearer Lessing. He foreshadows him closely too in his condemnation of the indiscriminate translation of French dramas for the German theatre and in his regret that English plays, which might afford German audiences greater pleasure, are excluded from the repertoire; in his plea for native manners for comedy; in his awareness, at a time when Gottsched's authority was supreme, of the greatness of Shakespeare; in his direct approach to the Greek dramatists and his recognition of the essential difference between them and their French imitators; in his suspicion of the unities as unassailable rules. By all this Schlegel gave German drama an unmistakeable, if modest, push forward. As regards practical problems of the theatre he did more than that; for here his suggestions received full acknowledgement and their influence is therefore undeniable. Löwen drew inspiration for his scheme for the Hamburg theatre from Schlegel's recommendations for the theatre in Copenhagen,¹ and in his announcement of the Hamburgische Dramaturgie Lessing quoted from the Schreiben von Errichtung eines Theaters in Kopenhagen (although he attributed the passage to the Gedanken). Robertson goes so far as to suggest that without Schlegel's clear and concrete plans for the Danish theatre the whole scheme of a national theatre in Hamburg might have remained rudimentary and impracticable.² Lessing remained convinced of the value of Schlegel's idea of a dramatic academy, and in a conversation with J. F. H. Müller in 1776 he recommended it as the best way to improve the Viennese stage.³ Such a "Pfanzschule" had indeed been promised by the directors of the Deutsches Theater in 1769⁴ but had not materialised. In 1777, however, a year after an academy of this kind had been formed in Copenhagen as a direct result of Schlegel's

1 J. F. Löwen, Schriften, Vierter Theil, Hamburg, 1766, pp. 1 ff.

2 J. G. Robertson, Lessing's Dramatic Theory, ed. E. Purdie, Cambridge, 1939, p. 342.

3 J. F. H. Müller, Abschied von der k.k. Hof- und National-Schaubühne, Wien, 1802, pp. 132 ff.

4 This was in a Nachricht an das Publikum which repeats most of Schlegel's suggestions. See Geschichte des gesamten Theaterwesens zu Wien, von den ältesten bis auf die gegenwärtigen Zeiten, Wien, 1803, pp. 135 ff.

suggestion,¹ the plan was carried out in Vienna.² Another suggestion which received Lessing's support, and which was put into practice in many theatres, was that the proceeds of one of the early performances - Schlegel suggests the fifth - should go to the author. Schlegel has hitherto received all the credit for this, but actually the idea had already been put forward by Gottsched in the preface to the second volume of the Schaubühne.³

In these more practical problems of the drama and the theatre it is clear enough that Schlegel is a precursor of Lessing. But it is as a pioneer in the movement towards an understanding of art that we wish to consider him here, and it is by no means so certain that his thoughts about the relation of drama to reality, and hence about the nature of art itself, ran on the same lines as Lessing's. The relative position of the two writers on this point still needs clarification, and it reveals itself best through a comparison of their attitude to probability, the unities and the function of drama.

Lessing approaches the question of dramatic probability, or at least one aspect of it, through the historical drama. As Schlegel too has much to say on this subject, it provides a convenient starting-point for comparison.

There are two things which make for a difference in their treatment of this subject. The first is that each has a completely different conception of the use of history as dramatic material. Lessing imagines that the dramatist first conceives his characters and then searches history for figures which resemble these. Having labelled his characters with these historical names, he may alter as he will the historical facts and situations, for to the dramatist these are not important. To him only the characters are of interest; and these are sacred (Dramaturgie 23). Except that Lessing's dramatist conceives characters first, what he says here is strongly reminiscent of Gottsched's

1 Cf. H. A. O. Reichard, Theater-Kalender auf das Jahr 1777, Gotha, p. 99. In Denmark Rosenstand-Goiske with his Dramatisk Journal took the rôle which Schlegel might have played so well had he lived, and supplied that regular criticism of plays and actors which was one of his main suggestions for improving the theatre. In the last number of his journal (1771) Rosenstand-Goiske directly refers to Schlegel in connection with a "Pflanzschule".

2 Cf. Müller, op. cit., pp. 237, 249.

3 Die deutsche Schaubühne, ed. cit., vol. 2, p. 22.

recipe for writing drama. The latter advised the dramatist to think first of a moral precept and to invent a suitable plot which would illustrate it. He must then look round in history for a similar event and give his characters the familiar historical names associated with it. Beyond this point the dramatist need have no further concern with the historical accuracy of either characters or events.¹ History simply serves to give tragedy the stamp of reality, to persuade the audience that this actually happened. Any deviations from fact are sanctioned if they further the ends of morality.

Lessing does not say why his dramatist wants historical names for his characters. Assuredly not for the same reason as Gottsched, for he realised well enough that drama "convinces" by portraying not what has happened but what could happen. All the same, it is very much of a recipe that he offers here, in that he takes no account of how a dramatist does in fact proceed when he creates historical drama. Indeed he goes so far as to say that he is not concerned with how most historical tragedies have been conceived, but with how they ought to be conceived!

Schlegel's point of departure is very different. He imagines that the initial stimulus for the dramatist comes from the historical characters or events; that, in recalling or discovering history, he feels the urge to make old heroes live again and to fashion into drama the deeds they did. This was how it happened to him with his own Canut. He tells us that he found the old Norse histories so rich in characters and great events that he was seized with the desire "to gather blooms from a field which poetry had hitherto left untouched."² This difference of approach makes Schlegel much less elastic than Lessing in his views on the relation of drama to history, and, at times, irritating in his pettifogging criticism of anachronisms and inaccuracies of costume. Nevertheless it is much more likely that a dramatist's imagination is set working in the way described by Schlegel rather than in that advocated by Lessing. But, in point of fact, the question can only be satisfactorily answered by distinguishing between historical tragedy and historical drama, a distinction which neither of them attempted.

1 C.D., p. 674.

2 Werke, III, p. 216; Ant., p. 168.

Historical tragedy is tragedy which takes for its theme events that have actually occurred. From these events the poet selects only such particulars as possess a significance passing beyond themselves. All that is neither relevant nor revealing he rejects. Into his subject, as it then presents itself to him, he has to inject the nerve of tragic conflict; into his characters he has to introduce motives which will adequately account for their deeds. And his aim in thus treating these fearful and pitiful events is to move his audience, to grip their emotions so that they are kept in tension. But if, instead of shaping his material, he wilfully distorts it, if he so blatantly departs from history that the spectator, confused by the contrast between this and the traditional figure he has held in his imagination, is tempted to ask: "Yes, but why give him that name rather than another?" then he will have failed in his object. Although he is not bound to follow history slavishly, the only justification a poet has for treating tragic events from history, is that he is interested in precisely those events, or in the characters concerned in them; in short, that he wanted to create a historical tragedy. This is what the Greeks did, and what Shakespeare did. In our time it is what T. S. Eliot has done in Murder in the Cathedral.

But the motive and the object of the poet who writes historical drama are different. His motive is frequently satire, and his object to interest and amuse his audience, but not to stir their emotions. A large part of the secret of his art rests on incongruity, and just by this trick of blatantly distorting history he is able to bring home points to his audience in a quite unique way. This is what Shaw does in Caesar and Cleopatra¹; he sets history at defiance in order to satirise under historic guise English conventions and prejudices of the nineteenth century.

Neither Lessing nor Schlegel realised this distinction. Although in the 23rd instalment of the Dramaturgie Lessing is talking about tragedy, the way he suggests for the dramatist is more likely to lead to historical drama. And just because Schlegel really thinks only of historical tragedy all the time, and applies these standards indiscriminately, he is unable to see that it is perfectly legitimate to disguise a satire of one's own time in historical costume. That is chiefly why he is unable to appreciate Régnard's Démocrate.

1 Cf. M. Macgregor, Studies and Diversions in Greek Literature, London, 1937, p. 6.

Although he did not think that the dramatist should write for the few, but rather for the average man, Schlegel pointed out that the value of historical accuracy is that it satisfies "den genauesten Kenner". And there is some truth in what he says. The historian, having a more practical relation to the material of the play than anyone else, may quite well be so disturbed by historical inaccuracies that he is unable to take pleasure in it at all. What Schlegel did not realise, however, is that, if the play is good enough, we may completely suspend our knowledge for the time being, and even the most historically-minded member of the audience may become a "poetic" spectator and be concerned only with intrinsic, instead of historical, truth. Lessing saw that it was the response of the audience that really mattered in judging a play such as Démocrate; and even those who knew perfectly well that Athens had no desert and no king, no tigers and no bears, still laughed heartily (Dram. 17).

The other thing that makes for a difference in their treatment of this question is that each has a different object of attack. Lessing's enemy is Voltaire with his carping criticism of historical inaccuracies. To combat him, Lessing will defend almost any dramatist or any play, for he is concerned to defend dramatic life against a drying breath which threatens the very essence of it. It is this checking-up with historical text-book in hand which maddens him, and makes him prepared to grant the poet considerably more licence in the use of historical material than he might have done, had he not had this object of irritation constantly before his eyes. It is possible that Schlegel might have reacted in similar fashion to such pedantic arrogance which seemed to sterilise the creativity of the poet. But his bête noire happened to be different, and it tended to drive him in just the opposite direction to Lessing.

He was irritated by the habit of labelling a tragedy with historical names when the characters might just as well have had fictitious ones. With his conception of historical tragedy, which is on the whole a right one, this was a quite justifiable objection. His mistake was to apply the same standards to satirical comedy. Perhaps his was too serious a nature for this vaudeville kind of burlesque, too serious to be able to appreciate the irresponsible gaiety of Régnard. But I am inclined to think that the true explanation is a different one. The plan for his own Gärtnerkönig suggests that he was unlikely to condemn this kind of comedy out of hand. In the satirical Totengespräch his concern is not to appreciate Démocrate,

any more than in Herodes it is to estimate the merits of Klaj as a playwright. In each of these, the object of his attack are certain French dramatists and their German imitators, and he mocks at the way they constantly prate about rules but proceed to evade them in practice. Unfortunately, in extending his criticism to Régnard's disregard of historical accuracy for the purposes of satire, he oversteps the mark and completely misses the point of the play.

Granted these differences in approach, it is amazing how similar are their conclusions on points which really matter. Lessing may administer a deserved rebuke for the pedantic criticism of costume and anachronisms, but he endorses Schlegel's main objections which concern the introduction of a bewildering number of irrelevant people and the quite unnecessary complication of the plot (Dram. 18); and in a later instalment (Dram. 33), he actually confirms Schlegel's main point that, if the characters created are totally unlike their historical counterparts, it would surely be better to avoid these names altogether. In fact at this point he assumes an even more rigid attitude than Schlegel's own, and asserts that, although the poet may juggle with the facts, no detail of the characters may be changed, for "die geringste Veränderung scheint uns die Individualität aufzuheben, und andere Personen unterzuschieben, betrügerische Personen, die fremde Namen usurpieren, und sich für etwas ausgeben, was sie nicht sind"; whereas Schlegel had been content so long as the dramatic character retained the broad outlines of the historical figure, and had sanctioned the introduction of any other traits which blended sufficiently well with these to make a living whole.

But that rigid attitude is exceptional in Lessing and in no way represents his usual position. It is much more typical of his whole approach when he asks whether it matters if Thomas Corneille's Essex is mainly fiction and very little fact; whether the play is the less moving because the poet happens to have used the names of real people (Dram. 23). A dramatist commits a far more grievous offence if he allows a character to be at odds with itself than if he makes it conflict with history (Dram. 34), for it is not historical truth which makes a poetic theme credible, but inner probability. This is the point on which Lessing and Schlegel are absolutely agreed whatever their minor differences. Both think that it is delineation of character which is of paramount importance for drama, that only the inferior poet rejoices in the mere piling up of intrigue and action. The more cautious Schlegel never says, as does Lessing, that the

characters must belong to the artists' own world, a world in which cause and effect may be in a different sequence but must yet follow on each other as strictly as here. But he is just as insistent that it is the characters and not the facts which make a play "probable", since the source of human action is in character; he is just as clear as Lessing about the necessity of precise motivation if the characters are to be made convincing. In fact on some points their wording is close enough to suggest direct influence.¹

Thus, although Lessing's attitude is frequently more elastic than Schlegel's and he is willing to concede the dramatist greater freedom in the handling of historical material, their approach to the question of dramatic probability is fundamentally the same in that both demand an "inner probability" of characterisation and motivation.

Now this is an aspect of probability which only concerns the content of drama, that which drama has in common with the epic and the novel, and even with the reality on which it is based. For even if we are recounting an event of every day life, we must give adequate information about the people concerned, and about their motives for acting in the way they did, if we wish to make our story convincing to the hearer. Otherwise his imagination is left unmoved, and he can but take the account on trust, accepting the facts because he is assured that they have happened. But there is another aspect of probability which concerns dramatic form, and whilst both Schlegel and Lessing are at one as regards probability of content, they differ in their attitude to probability of form. This difference is particularly apparent when they discuss the unities of time and place.

Both are agreed that such external rules as Gottsched had formulated as essential for drama are unimportant in themselves. He indeed disparagingly refers to the tragic situation and the delineation of character as the "äusserliche Stücke einer Tragödie". For him the real secret of dramatic excellence depends upon the observation of what he perversely calls the "innere Einrichtung",² by which he understands the unities, the liaison of scenes, etc.,²

1 Cf. Schlegel, Werke, III, p. 282 (Ant., p. 212) with Dram. 32.

2 C.D., p. 673.

all those technicalities which we should describe as most external and unimportant. Schlegel completely reverses this position. What for Gottsched are principles are for him merely precepts, intended only to facilitate the execution of the work from the point of view of the artist and to ensure the maximum of success in its effect. Even in his early review of Herodes he recognises that there are arbitrary rules of composition dependent on the age, the customs of the country, the language and the physical conditions of the theatre. They seem to him like a legal code based on well-proved experience and accepted with tacit understanding by playwright and audience. Hence he can later envisage the abrogation of these rules under changing conditions, and he declares that not even the strictest observance of them (here he is obviously tilting at Gottsched) can ever make up for the lack of effective treatment of character and action. It is these which for him constitute the essence of drama.¹

In this Schlegel anticipates Lessing's famous remark in the 46th Stück of the Dramaturgie: "die strengste Regelmässigkeit kann den kleinsten Fehler in den Charakteren nicht aufwiegen". Lessing is as impatient with those "kahle Kunstrichter" who think that the observation of mechanical rules is the sole source of dramatic perfection as is Schlegel with those who, "von ihrer Studierstube aus", prescribe rules and judge the intrinsic beauty of a play by its mere outward form.² Their impatience is particularly aroused by those who ostensibly conform to rules which in reality they do their utmost to evade: "Ein anderes ist, sich mit den Regeln abfinden; ein anderes sie wirklich beobachten" (Dram. 46). The rules which were most flagrantly broken in spirit whilst being kept in the letter were the unities of time and place. Both Schlegel and Lessing complain of the physical interpretation of these which insists that, since the spectator remains for three hours in the same place, the action on the stage must remain in the same place too, and its duration approximate as closely as possible to the length of the performance. When Lessing discusses the unity of place he quotes with approval a lengthy passage from the Gedanken "unsers Schlegels" to the effect that, if the action demands that the scene be changed, it would be better to openly admit this as do the English. Schlegel's constant complaint about the vague setting which was adopted in order to facilitate the apparent observance of the unity of place is

1 Werke, III, p. 292; Ant., p. 221.

2 Cf. Dram. 33 with Schlegel, Werke, III, p. 269 (Ant., p. 201).

echoed by Lessing when he writes: "Anstatt eines einzigen Ortes führten sie einen unbestimmten Ort ein" (Dram. 46), and that he was familiar with the whole of Schlegel's writings is clear from many verbal echoes.¹

The marked similarity between Schlegel and Lessing on this question of the unities should not blind us to the important difference between them in their attitude to form. Lessing, carried away by his opposition to Gottsched and the French, rejected both unities out of hand, and he did not discriminate between types of plays in which they might, or might not, be used to advantage. Schlegel, on the other hand, sees that these two unities are not without value of a certain kind for drama. While he is willing to dispense with them in plays which depend for their effect on considerable outward movement, and expresses his admiration for English plays in which they are disregarded, he yet recognises them as ideal conditions for the more concentrated type of inner psychological action. Moreover he distinguishes between the relative value of the two unities, and is more inclined to reject the unity of place than that of time. For he sees that the latter is often an indispensable condition of drama. In ordinary life events rarely follow upon each other quickly enough to lead to catastrophe; "so erachtet man es für nöthig, die Zeit so sehr einzuschliessen, als es möglich ist, damit eine Handlung in beständiger Bewegung sey, damit stets Folgen aus Folgen entstehen, und nichts durch einen Sprung geschehe. Denn sonst würde dieselbe durch allerley Zwischenfälle unterbrochen werden müssen ..."² A modern critic, Edward Bullough, points out that in many a tragedy the catastrophe would be even intrinsically impossible, if fatality did not overtake the hero with that rush which gives no time to forget and none to heal, and he adds that in such cases criticism has often (mistakenly) blamed the work for "improbability".³ This is just what Lessing does when he recites a list of events which are crammed into one day and asks: "Hat er darum die Einheit der Zeit beobachtet? Denn was er an einem Tage tun lässt, kann zwar an einem Tage getan werden, aber kein vernünftiger Mensch wird es an einem Tage tun"

1 Cf. Werke, III, p. 293 (Ant., pp. 221, 222) with Dram. 45, and pp. 11 and 95 (Ant., pp. 37, 65) with Dram. 46.

2 Werke, III, p. 295; Ant., p. 222.

3 E. Bullough, 'Psychical Distance' as a factor in art and an aesthetic principle. British Journal of Psychology, 1912, vol. 5, p. 103.

(Dram. 45). He is here applying to drama standards of every day commonsense. It is the old confusion between Art and Nature, and into this confusion Schlegel does not fall. He knows that in the theatre, as in any other art, there is no escape from convention, and that all conventions can be made acceptable, even though they may not be used indiscriminately. He is therefore willing to accept a certain measure of "improbability" occasioned by the unity of time, just as he accepts other conventions which, from the point of view of practical reality, are equally improbable.

Thus, although Schlegel is close to Lessing in his rejection of the absolute validity of the unities, in his recognition of their value for some kinds of drama and in his refusal to apply to such conventions the criterion of probability, he takes up a position which is aesthetically more defensible than Lessing's. The latter is much more prone to apply the measuring tape of reality, not only to the characters and their motives, where it is legitimate, but also to form, thus ignoring the essential difference between art and nature.

Indeed this distinction is one which Lessing never clearly accepted at all. When he speaks of the function of drama, his demands, if not those of every day life, are certainly those of metaphysics rather than of art. True he rejects, as does Schlegel, the idea that a drama should be written to illustrate any particular moral principle.¹ It is immaterial whether a general truth may be deduced from a play or not. But he nevertheless thinks that its function is to represent the kind of truth which will shew us what we should do and what we should leave undone; which will acquaint us with the signs of good and evil and with their consequences, so that we may never be tempted to abhor what we should desire or to desire what we should abhor (Dram. 34). Schlegel was content to observe that drama shews us things in a different relation, that it selects from reality, rounds off and throws into relief what it thus selects. Lessing sees this too, but he has to find for it a teleological explanation, as in the 70th Stück of the Dramaturgie which is the closest he comes to a fundamental consideration of aesthetic composition: "... nature is a spectacle only for an infinite mind. In order to have finite minds participate in the joy of this spectacle, these must be endowed with the faculty of prescribing limits, which nature herself does not possess ...

1 Cf. Schlegel, Werke, III, p. 271 (Ant., p. 203) with Dram. 35.

It is the purpose of art to relieve us of this isolation in the realm of the beautiful, and to facilitate the fixation of our attention." In this passage, Lessing's consideration is obviously metaphysical rather than aesthetic. As Nolte says, he lifts art from the hands of nature only to drop it into the lap of thought.¹ Although Schlegel is still to some extent held fast in the rationalistic approach to poetry - he could never have agreed with Grillparzer that it is a kind of Unsinn - he is yet much more open to its sensuous appeal than Lessing, and stresses rather its power to move than its meaning or message. He does not find it necessary to see in drama a copy in miniature of the infinite spectacle of the universe, but simply describes the craft of the dramatist, recognising that many of the changes he makes are due to the demands of his medium.

Even when Lessing makes our emotional reaction the test of whether a drama has too closely imitated nature, he cannot quite escape this confusion between art and life. He quite rightly points out that the principle of imitation of nature in itself would justify any dramatic monstrosity, and that some other criterion is necessary before we can decide whether a form such as tragi-comedy is legitimate or not. The criterion which he suggests is the emotional reaction of the spectators; and he maintains that, when witnessing an important and moving event in real life, we feel disturbed by the intervention of amusing or less significant interests, and seek to avoid the distraction which they cause. From this he concludes that it would be wrong for art to imitate just that which disturbs us in nature (Dram. 70). But, by thus going for his explanation to reality instead of remaining in the sphere of aesthetic reactions, he once again fails to recognise that art is different from life. Schlegel, dealing with the same question, does not make the same mistake. He makes no such reference to our reactions in life but confines his attention to the function of tragedy which is to arouse strong emotions in the spectator. Anything which would tend to weaken the force of these emotions should therefore be avoided, however life-like: "die Natur dient nicht zur Entschuldigung".² Here, as elsewhere, he keeps life and art clearly apart in their functions.

It is clear that in his dramatic criticism Schlegel more consistently adopts the aesthetic position than does Lessing. It should not therefore be assumed that his views could ever have had the same practical value for the future of the German drama. Lessing is the

1 F.O. Nolte, Lessing's Laocoon, Lancaster, P.A. 1940, p. 43.

2 Werke, III, p. 60; Ant., p. 93.

pioneer who gets things done. He is able to drive his lessons home in a way that his predecessor had been unable to do largely by virtue of his vigorous, trenchant language. Contrast, for instance, the bluntness of Lessing's disapproval of French affectation as "handwerksmässiger Zwang, kalte Etikette, missverstandene Kunst" with Schlegel's more cautious and indirect mode of expression:

"Ferner findet man bey den Franzosen, die sich auch in den geringsten Kleinigkeiten eine sehr ernsthafte Beschäftigung aus dem Wohlstande zu machen pflegen, eine gewisse ängstliche Höflichkeit ..."¹ Where Schlegel is content with a colourless generality, in Lessing the same thing becomes concrete, individual, alive, dramatic. The real reason for his superiority is to be sought, not so much in his thought, as in his language and in the campaigning nature of his writings, that uncompromising one-sidedness which does not allow him to dwell on the virtues of his opponents, even if he sees them. It is not without significance that in the Dramaturgie he mentions Racine only in passing and not without disparagement, indiscriminately coupling his name with that of Corneille. Perhaps he feared that, by according to Racine the praise which was his due, he would furnish his opponents with weapons with which to confute his own arguments. Schlegel had less biased views, but for that very reason was much less likely to make them prevail. In his whole-hearted appreciation of Racine, as in his discriminating analysis of the difference between him and Corneille, he reveals a truer approach, though one not so likely to produce reforms. With an impartiality which springs from having no axe to grind and no windmills to tilt at, he remains open to the virtues of the most widely-differing kinds of drama - that of the Greeks, of Racine and Molière, of Shakespeare, Holberg and Gryphius; and his insistence on the merits of the native drama of each nation, as well as his demand that dramatists should return for their material to native history and saga, strike a note which anticipates Herder. Critics have often been eager to claim Schlegel as a pioneer in the movement to overthrow the French, but this he never was in any indiscriminate sense. Much as he deplored the exclusive domination of the German stage by French traditions, much as he derided some of their dramatic methods, his love for the great French dramatists continues to the end. His analysis of the national temperament of the English and the French, and the way in which he traces the differences in their drama to this difference of character, reveal him as a critic with the historical approach who, in being able to see the merits of the French without being slavishly bound to them, was unusual in his time.

1 Werke, III, p. 264; Ant., p. 196.

We are here concerned, however, not with a history of German drama, but with the development of an understanding of art, and at this point Lessing and Schlegel follow different paths, however close they may be in much of their dramatic criticism. Schlegel saw drama not as a photographic reproduction of reality, but as an imitation of characters in action, an imitation from which irrelevancies have been pruned and everything omitted which does not contribute to the desired effect; an imitation in which characters are revealed in a light which life itself can rarely shed upon them, and the whole made convincing by a strict causality and adequate motivation. Lessing does not demand a photographic reproduction of reality either; but the principles which he suggests as a guide to the artist in selecting from the objects of reality are philosophical rather than aesthetic ones. He expects him to represent a "truth" which is not apparent in the seemingly fortuitous events of life, and to do this with the intention of producing in us an illusion of reality, not, it is true, a crude illusion of the senses, but a reaction in which our emotions are indistinguishable from those which we normally experience. Thus the artist is not distinguished from the philosopher.

What we can thus deduce about Lessing and the problem of art from the Dramaturgie is borne out by his other writings. He did not dispute the principle of imitation, but he never made any pretence of investigating its scope. Rather he accepted Batteux' doctrine as an established fact. Even in his most mature work he never got beyond the idea of imitation of la belle nature. Being concerned only with the practical things of literature, he had no wish to link himself with the speculative aesthetic of Baumgarten, and he doubtless preferred works such as Batteux' just because they assume the beautiful and more or less give instructions for reproducing it in art. Hence, although in practical questions of poetry, Lessing retained his independence completely and often attacked Batteux, on the fundamental problem of the essence of art he accepts his views unquestioningly, and in his review of Adolf Schlegel's translation and commentary he praises Batteux without even referring to Schlegel's significant objections.

Lessing demands that whatever is imitated by the artist shall first be pleasing in itself. Beauty does not arise through the process of imitation; its essence is to be sought in the object of reality, not in the art. Since he saw no virtue in mere landscape, he could find no virtue in the treatment of it, and he failed to

understand that even the ugliest object, the most unpromising event, can be used with effect by the artist. It seems not to have occurred to him that art itself might endow nature with an ideal; that this is to be found, not in the quality of the artist's subject, but in the quality of his treatment. Indeed his interest is not in aesthetic principles at all, although the fact that he wrote the Laokoon might lead one to assume the contrary. He is never able to put his finger on the essence of art, and he is not moved, as was Schlegel, to reckon with its unlikeliest forms.

Equally unconcerned with these, and equally unable to define art, are the theorists of the Sturm und Drang. They try to understand art, not by examining its forms or its relation to reality, but by exploring the personality of the creative artist. In this they were following in the footsteps of Klopstock who in his attack on Batteux¹ argues that the imitation theory cannot account for lyric poetry: "If my friend feels almost the same as I do because I have lost my beloved, and if he communicates this sympathy with my suffering to other people, is that just imitation? In such a case, to ask nothing from the poet but imitation is to turn him into an actor." For Klopstock poetry is "Ausdruck des selbsterlebten Gefühls". The poet does not shew things as they are in reality; he selects from them those aspects which have moved him and are capable of moving others. In art, according to him, everything depends on the emotional value of the subject treated.

Viewed historically, this is a distinct advance, because what was so lacking in German literature up to the middle of the century was this very emotional content, feelings which were strong and directly experienced. But Klopstock was mistaken in thinking that, by substituting expression for imitation, he was advancing a theory of poetry which had intrinsically greater value than the one he was combating. To stress feeling does indeed complement the idea of imitation, but it fails to draw attention to the difference between expressing feeling in general and expressing it as an art.

The Stürmer und Dränger are equally convinced of the importance of feeling for poetry and are obsessed with the creative personality of the poet. Their tendency is to identify the essence of poetry with the nature of the poet. This is why Gerstenberg is so concerned

1 Gedanken über die Natur der Poesie, 1759. Sämmtliche Werke, XVI, Leipzig, 1830.

to discover the distinction between poetic genius and any other kind of genius. He tries to get at the nature of it by investigating the effect of the poet's work upon us and finds that his distinguishing mark is his power to produce illusion, to make us absorbed in something even against our will. In thus recognising the importance of the aesthetic reaction, Gerstenberg made an important contribution to the understanding of art, but he was forced to confess his failure to define completely the nature of poetic genius, nor indeed could he hope to do so without taking into account the importance of medium and craftsmanship.

Lenz too is concerned to find the distinguishing mark of the poet. He agrees in the main with Gerstenberg's description of him as a genius who is capable of producing illusion, but he fears that to merely reflect back images so faithfully that they might be confused with their originals in nature would result in mere naturalism. In an attempt to avoid this, he introduces another criterion of the poet which he derived from Lessing, "mit Absicht dichten". This he renders as "Standpunkt nehmen", by which he means that the poet should be guided in his selection of the images to be reproduced by a unifying intention, or point of view, which will give them coherence. But in thus wishing poetry to convey a message of some kind, he is concerned only with the content and not with the form, and this in spite of the fact that, like all the Stürmer und Dränger, he thinks of the poet as a "maker", "a second creator under Jove". This equation of the artist with the creator runs through all their works, but the point to note is that there is very little difference for them between "Idealmensch" and "Idealdichter". It is by acting and doing that we resemble God, who never ceases to act and do; and when Goethe says in Von deutscher Baukunst "In dem Menschen ist eine bildende Natur", he means man in general and not the artist in particular. And it is just here that he and his fellows fail. They see clearly enough the importance of energy for the artist, but none of them succeeds in saying how he happens to create art rather than anything else. For energy is something which the artist has in common with other great men and, although creation undoubtedly has considerable validity as a contrast and corrective to representation, it has little value as a standard in itself.

A similar confusion is apparent in the Sturm und Drang conception of the effect of art. In expecting a drama to stimulate to action, they are moved by practical, rather than aesthetic, considerations. Lenz suggests that, to estimate the value of a drama, we should enquire what effect it has had, not only upon our being, but upon our doing.

Götz, he thinks, should challenge men to emulation; by reading or witnessing the play, they should feel moved to imitate him.¹ Thus the theme should stimulate directly to action; unless it does this, it has failed in its purpose, however perfect the satisfaction we derive from the work. This is also the thesis of Schiller's early essays on the drama, in which the stage is thought of as a moral institution, a school of practical wisdom. Its function is to serve as a complement to religion and law and Schiller clearly envisaged all kinds of direct practical effects which drama might have. It is with something of regret that he admits that its lessons may often fall on deaf ears, and that Karl Moor's unhappy history may not have the effect of making the highways safer! Such an attitude, although it assumes that the appeal of drama is through the emotions, cannot disassociate these emotions from their practical reference to life. It does not conceive of a peculiarly aesthetic reaction, but of a direct appeal to the ordinary human emotions. Hence Schiller's statement: "Der unglückliche weint hier mit fremdem Kummer seinen eigenen aus."²

This new feeling for imagination and emotion does invaluable work in infusing literature with a new vitality. It brings something dynamic into poetic creation, and, for the forward movement of German literature, it was urgently necessary, nay indispensable, that the floodgates should be thus opened to feeling and vitality. But to our understanding of art this makes only a one-sided contribution. For, despite the substitution of feeling, imagination and creation, for rules, probability and imitation, Sturm und Drang distinguishes just as little as did Gottsched between art and life. The other contribution, which is just as necessary for a complete understanding of the essence of art, is made by those who insist that art is not nature and never pretends to be nature, that it is a copy neither of objects without, nor of emotions within, the artist; by those, who, instead of trying to blur the frontier between art and life, fully recognise the distinction between them, studying the forms of art because they know that therein must be sought the key to the difference. To this trend Schlegel belongs.

To recognise this in no way minimises the value of such movements as Sturm und Drang, with their power of fertilising literature, and

1 Ueber Goetz von Berlichingen. Gesammelte Schriften. Leipzig, 1917, Bd. IV, p. 303.

2 Die Schaubühne als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet. Sämtliche Werke. Stuttgart und Berlin, 1904, O5, Bd. XI, pp. 99, 100.

especially the drama. Drama is a Janus-like art, looking at once towards nature and away from it and ever seeking to establish a new balance between these two opposing tendencies. While excessively naturalistic theories can never be fruitful for the understanding of the essence of drama, and rarely in practice produce great plays of lasting value, they yet often provide a healthy reaction against outworn forms and conventions and thereby infuse new life into the theatre. Even Gottsched's reforms tended in this direction, and if, in spite of these more natural forms, the drama produced made a singularly lifeless impression, this was due as much as anything to lack of content in the national life. For, more than any other artist, the dramatist looks outward for his material; what passes through the alembic of his creative imagination has first to come into him from the outside world. The musician, on the other hand, looks inward, since his is the least representative of all the arts; and it is not without significance that, in a period when Bach, unaffected by the nullity of life without, was creating out of the richness of his inner experience, the drama of Germany was at a low ebb. Indeed in this early period, despite more natural forms, little could be done but practise these forms assiduously until the national life should have assumed greater significance. And this is the significance of all the play-writing and play-staging in the years between 1740 and Lessing's first plays: that the thin, poor scraps of reality were being poured into the mould of dramatic form, and acted and witnessed. So that when Lessing came to Leipzig he found a stage on which regular drama was performed, - and, if he could not go to the theatre to see what was right and be inspired by it, he could at least go to see what was wrong and to criticise it.

What Gottsched and his immediate successors failed to do for the content of drama was accomplished by Lessing and the Sturm und Drang. In the 7th Book of Dichtung und Wahrheit Goethe hails Minna von Barnhelm as "the first dramatic work which drew its subject from the greater public life". And indeed the Stürmer und Dränger were so obsessed with the new content which they had found for drama, that their theory is mainly concerned with this, and they come no nearer to solving the problem of significant form. This could only come out of the recognition that, however life-like the content, drama in its forms and effects must yet be something very different from life itself. Whatever the differences - and

they are many - between Lessing and Gottsched, between the Swiss critics and the Sturm und Drang, they all have this in common, that they are concerned rather to stress the similarities between art and life than the differences. Lessing and Gottsched look for the ideal in outer reality; the Swiss and the Sturm und Drang look for it in the poetic imagination. Schlegel looks for it in art itself; and although his artist is a 'mere' craftsman compared with the would be 'creators' and 'gods' of the Sturm und Drang, yet that is how the artist producing great art has usually seen himself. He has been concerned with his art rather than with his own nature. In seeing that the ideal is in the art, in what the artist makes of his Stoff, Schlegel is nearer to Mendelssohn than to any other of his contemporaries or successors.

In an illuminating comment on a remark of Herder, Mendelssohn reveals in one flash the whole failure of Sturm und Drang aesthetic theory and his own more profound insight into the essence of art. "'Wilde Einfalt', sagt der Verfasser (Herder), 'ist das Feld der Dichtkunst.' - O ja! als ein Gegenstand der Nachahmung; denn sie ist reich an Illusion. So lange aber diese wilde Einfalt noch Natur ist, giebt es noch keine Dichtkunst."¹ In this statement Mendelssohn fully recognises the importance of feeling, of naturalness, of vital energy; such things have power to move and without them poetry is not poetry. But he recognises too that these are not enough, but that in the hands of the artist they must undergo a transformation into "something rich and strange". He does not think that beauty in art results from selecting from the beauties of nature, but from the art of the artist as he creates a new whole in his own medium, and in so doing often has to depart from nature. It is here that he is so akin to Schlegel. The latter has not the same interest in the nature of the creative artist; his artist is a humble imitator, and it is with something of a sense of daring that he suggests that he transforms the raw material of nature into art, and that the actor creates a death of his own. But in thinking that the essence of art is in the "making", and not in the mere selecting from nature, in recognising the non-realistic forms of art, and that the artist must often depart from nature to get his effects, Schlegel is a forerunner of Mendelssohn, just as Mendelssohn himself, despite many differences, is a forerunner of the mature Schiller and Goethe.

Mendelssohn, in fact, takes into himself both streams of aesthetic development; that which bases poetry on feeling and intuition, and is chiefly interested in its creation and the nature of him who creates it; and that other stream which sees art as an

1 Über Herders deutsche Litteratur, Gesammelte Schriften, ed. G. B. Mendelssohn. Leipzig, 1843-5. Bd. IV, 1, p. 99.

imitation of nature and is concerned to define its essence by taking account of its forms. He does not think that imitation of nature affords a wholly adequate account of art and artistic creation, but he by no means rejects the principle altogether, retaining it particularly for those arts - the representative ones - which obviously have an original in nature. The other arts, he thinks, are a realisation of beauty in a given medium. He is thus aware of the two opposing tendencies of art, the representative and the formal, and recognises that, although both may be present, in some of the arts the one has disappeared almost to vanishing point.

In Mendelssohn's theory, which is strongly influenced by Shaftesbury and Baumgarten, the sensuous appeal of art comes into its own, and it is to the psychological aspect of aesthetics that he made the most important contributions. He is interested to examine the effect of a work of art on the recipient and to describe as precisely as possible the nature of this effect. Here again there is kinship with Schlegel, for both seize on the dual, paradoxical nature of all aesthetic experience; both see that in it we are moved as by the objects and events of reality and yet differently; if there is terror, it is yet sweet, and not like the terror of actual life.

Schlegel, then, despite his closeness to Lessing in practical dramatic theory and criticism, belongs to a quite different stream in the development of aesthetic understanding. In recognising that, while art has constant reference to life both in its creation and in its effects, it is yet a world with laws and forms of its own, he to some extent takes up the line of Feind, who, right at the beginning of the century, maintained that art was a "Fiktion" and under no compulsion to copy the larger world, since if it merely did that it would be superfluous. The line then continues from Schlegel over Mendelssohn, to culminate at the end of the century in that profound interchange of thought between Schiller and Goethe on the nature of art and of the aesthetic experience.

II

The test of any aesthetic theory is as much in the kind of problems it considers as in the way in which it treats them. Its value depends on whether these are essential problems of art which concern its fundamental nature, or merely historical problems which have reference only to its more temporary manifestations. Some of the problems dealt with at such length by Schlegel's contemporaries have no further interest for us now. Either they automatically ceased to be problems as the onward movement of literature brought its own solution of them; or the treatment accorded to them was such as to warrant no more than historical interest. How far does Schlegel himself touch on problems which are not outworn and merely peculiar to his time? Many of the questions with which he is concerned, the artist's medium, the nature of the aesthetic experience, illusion, the necessity of a degree of distance, are questions which are still discussed by writers on aesthetics and are still, as then, a source of confusion in the popular mind. That he failed to offer final solutions to these problems is obvious enough. The significant thing is that he was aware of them when most critics were either occupied with completely inessential problems, or, in their discussions, remained outside the aesthetic sphere. Schlegel is advanced, not only in the problems he tackled, but also by reason of those he ignored. He completely ignores, for instance, the problem of trying to define Beauty, preferring to concentrate on a description of the aesthetic reaction and to let that be the criterion of the value of a work of art. In doing this he is completely in line with modern aesthetics whose centre of gravity has been shifted from the problem of absolute Beauty to the study of the recipient consciousness as it is affected by Beauty. Another modern trait is his manner of approach to the problems which he discusses. He makes constant reference to his own personal experience as the basis of his arguments and insists that others should do this too.

It consequently does Schlegel less than justice to make mere generalising statements about the "idealising" tendency of his theory of art. While the use of the word "idealising" in a special sense to denote the intrinsic idealism of art is, of course, perfectly legitimate, it yet has the disadvantage of being ambiguous unless more closely defined. And it is particularly liable to be

misleading when used with reference to a period such as the mid-eighteenth century when the tragedy in vogue was marked by a singular remoteness from everyday life. The position tends to be still further obscured too by Schlegel's preference for drama in verse which caused one critic to attribute to him a delight in mere polish.¹ For it might easily, and excusably, be assumed that in Schlegel's view the idealising function of art lay in the direction of either purely formal, or of moral, beauty. As Schiller said in deprecating the use of the word "veredeln" in this same sense: "Das Wort veredeln erinnert immer an verbessern, an eine moralische Erhebung. Der Teufel, idealisiert, müsste moralisch schlimmer werden, als er ohne das wäre."² It would seem, therefore, more satisfactory to be quite specific and to see just how far Schlegel got towards a solution of each problem he tackled; to note exactly in what way he thought art differed from reality. Thereby we may more clearly ascertain both the direction and the extent of his understanding of art.

It was not possible for most former critics of Schlegel to bring out the full significance of his views for two reasons. Firstly, they all labour under the delusion that "expression" or "creation" is an adequate explanation of the phenomenon of art and represents a tremendous advance over the theory of "imitation", to which they will allow no value whatsoever. Blinded by their eagerness to shew that this was outworn, they fail to see the merits of any aesthetic views which operate with its terminology. Moreover all these critics were writing round about the nineties of the last century and, caught, as they are, in the flood-tide of the naturalist movement, they think that the aesthetic experience consists solely in being moved. They are not concerned to describe more nearly how we are moved, nor to distinguish this from other ways of being moved. Hence much of the significance of Schlegel's discussion of aesthetic pleasure and illusion is lost upon them.

Secondly, the importance of the rôle of medium in any account of the nature of art had not yet been recognised. Arno Holz's formula, "Die Kunst hat die Tendenz, wieder die Natur zu sein; sie wird sie nach Massgabe ihrer jeweiligen Reproduktionsbedingungen und deren Handhabung", recognises only the limiting effect which

1 Söderhjelm, Om J. E. Schlegel, särskildt som lustspeldiktare, Copenhagen, 1884, p. 112.

2 Bemerkungen zu Körners Aufsatz "Über Charakterdarstellung in der Musik", 10. March, 1795. Not in the Säkular-Ausgabe but in Goedeke's Historisch-kritische Ausgabe, XV, 1, pp. 378 ff.

medium must have on art as it strives to be ever more like nature. It completely ignores the formal value inherent in medium; ignores that it is the central fact of art and that which justifies the artist when he seems to turn his back on nature in order to explore the resources of his medium. The impossibility of either describing the vision of the artist,¹ or of talking about the essence and the forms of art, unless we think of the artist working in a "material", fashioning and shaping it, has only been fully realised in recent years. Schlegel devotes considerable attention to the significance of medium in art and we now want to see exactly what the results of his investigation are.

F. O. Nolte, in his recent book on Lessing's Laokoon, points out that, although we should seriously object to two heads and only one foot in sculpture, we are perfectly satisfied and delighted to hear human beings on the stage extemporaneously talking in the most glorious blank verse. Yet the latter phenomenon is, scarcely less than the first, a gross violation of customary fitness. He asks what conclusions we are to draw from this and suggests that it is simply that the medium of the dramatist has much greater latitude and elasticity than that of the sculptor.² I mention this for two reasons. Firstly, because these are the very questions which Schlegel asks, and we can judge, therefore, how much the problems which he tackles are still thought worthy of discussion. Secondly, because the inadmissible distortion of the human body in sculpture is precisely one of the examples he takes. A sculptor, he declares, may model a bust and leave away the rest of the body without offending our sense of reality; if, however, he were to attach feet to the bust, thereby introducing false proportions, we should at once be conscious of the distortion of the human body.³ The laws of the sculptor's medium will not tolerate such deviations from nature, although others, such as the omission of colour, this medium not only tolerates, but even seems to demand.⁴ For in sculpture, despite its representative character, the inherent convention found somewhere in all art, lies plainly on the surface.

1 Cf. S. Alexander, Beauty and other Forms of Value, London, 1933, p. 49.

2 Nolte, op. cit., p. 62.

3 Werke, III, p. 58; Ant., p. 116.

4 Ibid., p. 75; Ant., p. 11.

Thus far Schlegel is in agreement with the modern aesthete. But when he turns to the medium of drama he argues somewhat differently. For, unlike Nolte, he does not conclude that this medium allows greater latitude than that of the sculptor, but declares that if a dramatist writes a play in verse rather than in prose, then he does so because in this particular instance he has chosen verse as his medium; and, Schlegel maintains, the poet has as much right to choose either prose or verse for his medium, as the painter, in rendering the varied colourfulness of nature, may choose to do it in black and white rather than in colours. The improbability of human beings extemporising in verse is not for Schlegel a mark of the elasticity of the dramatic medium. The verse itself is the medium. It is, therefore, as idle to query the probability of verse for the dramatist as to query that of stone for the sculptor. Indeed standards of probability should not be applied to medium at all.

It would be hard to say whether Schlegel's approach to this question is generally fruitful or not, because of the extraordinary difficulty of defining the medium of the dramatist. To one dramatist the actress may be what canvas and colour are to the painter; to another she may seem rather his interpreter. And then we have to ask: What is the medium of her art? Probably the medium of dramatic art in general must include the stage and all the stage mechanisms and trappings, and perhaps much else besides.¹ Schlegel does not get as far as saying that dramatic form itself is a medium, although some remarks which he makes might conceivably have led on to such a train of thought, had he not been side-tracked by his defence of verse. There is a suggestion of it in his observation that the dramatist so orders events, and the comings and goings of his characters, that they conform to his requirements instead of following the haphazard sequence of real life.² His defence of comedy in verse on the grounds that the verse is then to be thought of as the dramatist's medium, may or may not be generally fruitful. But the great merit of this approach is that he thereby clearly shews the futility of extending criteria of probability to the medium of any art. From this he can draw the important conclusion that an artist

1 Cf. J. M. Thorburn, Art and the Unconscious, London, 1925, pp. 82, 83.

2 Werke, III, p. 75; Ant., p. 11.

should never be blamed for not being more naturalistic than the qualities of his medium will permit, for the essential nature of his medium must on no account be violated.¹ He even goes further and maintains that the artist need not even exploit the naturalistic possibilities of his medium to the full, but, on the contrary, is free to determine the extent to which he will explore its capacity for representation. This right of the artist to work in a chosen medium, and to manipulate it as he will, needed to be vindicated then; and even to-day is far from being generally accepted. It is only necessary to glance at the correspondence columns of the daily press on the appearance of unorthodox works of sculpture such as Epstein's, to see how the public mind is still obsessed with the old conception of art as an imitation of nature. Or again, the letters to the Radio Times during a recent controversy on opera were largely inspired by the same arguments against its non-naturalistic forms as Gottsched used 200 years ago.

Lessing has by no means so clear an understanding of medium as Schlegel. I cannot help feeling that this is to some extent due to his choice of terms. Medium, for him, is always "Mittel", and art some idealised "bit of nature" communicated by "Zeichen". Such words, unlike the pregnant "Materie" used by Schlegel and Mendelssohn, shew no sense of medium as the material in which the artist works, as he shapes and fashions it to realise his vision. And, indeed, Lessing is singularly unaware of the sensuous in art. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the medium of literature, with which Lessing was chiefly concerned, presents unique difficulties. For language is also the instrument of the intellect and the apparent preservation of the intellectual form in poetry makes it inevitable that theories should have arisen which vested the poetical worth of literature in its truth. This was a conception of literature which would naturally appeal to Lessing, and it blinded him to the imaginative and sensuous qualities of poetry. One remark in the Laokoon seems more promising in this respect. He maintains that the poet does not want to be merely comprehensible. Only the prose author is satisfied with being clear and distinct. But he follows it up with the extraordinary statement that it is the poet's aim to conjure up in us such vivid impressions of the objects he describes that we become completely unconscious of the medium he employs to do so. This surely strikes at the very roots of poetry, for how can we be delighted by art if we are unaware of it and deluded into thinking that we are face to face

1 Ibid., pp. 120, 121; Ant., p. 119.

with reality? It is language itself which is important in poetry, its sonorous sounds, its suggestiveness, its power of calling up associations. And to this Lessing, in his theory at least, seems oblivious.

Schlegel takes exactly the opposite view. For him syllables may have a lovely consonance, and our delighted awareness of them will prevent us from ever imagining that we are confronted by real persons and real objects and not by a work of art. He is very open to the sensuous appeal of poetry and thinks that the loveliness of the verse echoing in the memory keeps alive an aesthetic impression long after we have received it.

A modern writer on art has said that the problem of medium is the key to the problem of art.¹ By this he means, I think, two things; that medium alone can account for the tendency of art, even at its most representative, to turn away from nature in search of formal values; and that medium alone can enable us to understand the imagination of the artist. Ultimately, in order to arrive at an understanding of art, it has to be perceived that these two things are inextricably linked; that the artist does not merely obey the laws of his medium because they exist and compel obedience from him, but that the influence of the medium penetrates his vision in its minutest details, that the fascination which it exerts upon his imagination is such as to lead him away from nature into absorbing explorations of the qualities of the medium itself. But in the study of aesthetics the problem of medium and that of the artistic imagination long remained separate, although practising artists have themselves usually been conscious of the power of their medium upon their creative activity. Even Goethe, who can make his Werther exclaim: "Ich könnte jetzt nicht zeichnen, nicht einen Strich und bin nie ein grösserer Maler gewesen als in diesem Augenblick", yet knows well enough that the truly fashioning impulse comes from vital contact with the medium. He writes to Herder: "Dreingreifen, packen ist das Wesen ieder meisterschaft. Ihr habt das der Bildhauerey vindiziert, und ich finde dass ieder Künstler so lang seine Hände nicht plastisch arbeiten nichts ist."²

1 Thorburn, op. cit., p. 37.

2 Der junge Goethe. Neue Ausgabe in sechs Bänden besorgt von Max Morris, Bd. II, Leipzig, 1910, p. 294.

Schlegel ignores the question of the artist's imagination altogether, so that he does not touch on this second aspect of the importance of medium at all. But with the first he is very much concerned. For, although he remains frankly and admittedly within the theory of imitation of nature, he sees clearly that the central factor of art is medium which, by its very essence, compels art to be unlike nature. He thinks the relation of the work of art to reality less important than, indeed incidental to, the medium, which exists in its own right as the material in which the artist plies his craft. It is not the requirements of the "bit of nature" to be imitated, but his own skill, which determines the artist in his choice of a medium; and a work of art can be as perfect in a medium which allows little similarity with the original as in one which allows a great deal. Unlike Lessing he thinks that any subject is suitable for treatment in any medium. The only exception he makes is that music is unsuitable for rendering either visual images or the more definite kind of emotions or emotional situations. In his opinion, it is foolish for the musician to try to convey either the waves of the sea or the Gordian knot.

Schlegel's main achievement is then that he establishes the artist's right to work in a chosen medium and to comply with laws inherent in that medium. Thinking on these lines of verse as a medium in which the dramatist may choose to work enables him to dispose of objections to drama in verse in the only aesthetically legitimate way. If he thus recognises that medium, by its very nature, involves many departures from reality, he is equally clear that others are occasioned by the necessity of ensuring an aesthetic effect, the desired response from the recipient. It could not occur to Schlegel that the artist should do other than humbly try to give satisfaction. The self-conscious artist, working to please himself, had not yet made his appearance; and although it is undeniably true that an artist can only create as his imagination prompts him, the greatest among them have not been insensible to the effect which their work would produce. Whereas Victor Hugo boasts of the innovations he is introducing in his Cromwell, Racine in the preface to his much more poetic Bérénice apologises for the liberties he is taking with the story. So too Goethe and Schiller, while not prepared to descend to the level of their public, have a very clear conception of the reaction they wish to call forth, and in their correspondence they discuss ways and means of ensuring it.

Schlegel is convinced that the artist must always have this recipient consciousness in mind and that, in its interests, close imitation of nature must frequently be sacrificed. If the artist is to know what he is aiming at, the nature of the experience must be as clear to him as possible. The difficulty in defining the aesthetic experience is twofold. On the one hand it differs from person to person in intensity and quality, and we are forced to rely for our information on our own introspection and on that of others. On the other hand the various arts, and works of art, differ so much in the impressions they give that any attempt to reduce them to the apparent simplicity of a general definition runs the risk of losing the richness of their infinite variety. The effects produced by contemplating a statue, listening to a piece of music or witnessing a tragedy differ radically from each other. Again there is a difference in the impression produced by one tragedy and that produced by another. In this respect, as in all others, each work of art is unique. But common to all aesthetic impressions there must be features which could be claimed to represent the essence of the aesthetic impression in general and thus afford a common denominator for the most varied aesthetic effects. Tragedy undoubtedly gives a different experience from sculpture; yet between these two kinds of experience exists a similarity which in turn distinguishes them from the experiences of practical living. There is some element which marks off experiences produced by art from those produced by, let us say, dialectic reasoning, moral or political exhortation, or a quarrel with a friend.

In view of these complications, the first step towards an understanding of the aesthetic experience is to isolate it from others with which it is often confused. Schlegel does this by recognising and insisting that there is an "inevitable" effect which arises from the very essence of art and must always be present in appreciation. He expressly states that this is the only effect which necessarily need ensue from the contemplation of art and he thereby condemns those who would demand that art must produce reactions which properly belong to other spheres of life. In this he is tilting at Gottsched's didactic tendencies, but such a claim also strikes at Lessing's pre-occupation with the philosophical truth of literature, or with the Sturm und Drang's demand that it should move to action. This desire to recognise a distinct experience arising from art in general does not, however, blind Schlegel to the fact that any individual work of

art may also produce other effects besides. In distinguishing the function of art from the purpose of the artist, he shews himself in advance of any of his contemporaries, and strangely in tune with the best modern criticism. This comes out clearly in his statement that the purpose of art is an essential and inevitable effect, whereas the purpose of the artist is incidental to the art and often arbitrarily introduced. The phrasing is not unlike that of Edward Bullough when he writes that the function of Art may reveal itself in consequences quite independent of those consciously aimed at, in effects not intentionally striven for;¹ and other critics, such as Iascelles Abercrombie, find it necessary to draw the same distinction as Schlegel between applied literature, which can be regarded as literature by ignoring its author's purpose, and pure literature, where no such exclusion of the author's purpose is required.²

In attempting a definition of the aesthetic experience it is not enough to thus distinguish the essential function of art from other purposes, such as the didactic purpose, which an artist may choose to introduce into his work. By yet a further process of elimination a distinction has to be made between the specifically aesthetic impression and other pleasurable impressions which a work of art may afford. Schlegel, again like most modern writers on aesthetics, does not fail to do this. The aesthetic impression is one arising from a work as a whole. That Schlegel thinks of it as deriving from the very essence of art is clear from the fact that he always uses the term "Nachahmung" rather than "Bild" in this connexion; the latter he used to denote simply the finished work of art; but "Nachahmung", as he carefully explained, signifies the process of making that work, the whole transformation into art. Hence he always speaks of the aesthetic experience as the one which "allein nothwendig aus dem Wesen der Nachahmung entsteht." All other pleasurable impressions which the "Bild" may afford are incidental to this. They may arise either from the medium as such or from the subject which the artist has treated. Bradley³ points out that a certain amount of pleasure can be obtained from versification, taken, as far as it is possible to do this, all by itself. It is not an easy thing to do because in poetry, as in all the other arts, the content is one thing with the form; but versification can in some

1 A Course of Lectures delivered Autumn, 1907. Privately printed, Cambridge. p. 99.

2 Principles of Literary Criticism, London, 1932, p. 28. Cf. Thorburn's distinction between the artist and the man, who may wish his ideas to take effect within the society where he finds himself (op.cit., p. 26).

3 A. C. Bradley, Poetry for Poetry's sake. Oxford Lectures on Poetry, London, 1909, pp. 21, 22.

measure be abstracted from what is an indissoluble whole by hearing poetry read aloud in some language of which we do not understand a syllable. The sensuous pleasure in the sonorousness and rhythm of the words may be considerable, but we should not wish to listen for long, and the impression can scarcely be confused with our experience when listening to poetry which we understand. As Bradley insists, in actual poetic experience we do not meet with this sensuous pleasure as such at all. In some of the other arts it is not so difficult to abstract the medium and there are people who will lovingly caress the surface of a beautiful marble or feel a thrill of sensuous enjoyment at the beauty of a finely-grained stone. The same applies to preferences for certain musical instruments. Some people have a special love for the violin as such. They derive a thrill of pleasure merely from hearing it being tuned up and prefer its sounds to those of the piano with its fewer overtones. But they will not therefore prefer to listen to inferior works for the violin rather than to great works for the piano, for such preferences play an insignificant part in the appreciation of a musical composition.

Schlegel had a strong sense of the beauty of versification as such, and it says much for his reliance on his own experience in aesthetic matters, and for the strength and clarity of his impressions, that he was able to avoid confusing this pleasure with the experience derived from a work as a whole. Bullough¹ says that people often uncritically admit into the effect of a work, as aesthetic enjoyment, all kinds of pleasant impressions which may have nothing whatever to do with it. Schlegel does not fall into this trap. He recognises that these other impressions, pleasant as they may be, are merely incidental to the essential aesthetic experience. The one mistake he makes is in thinking that the pleasure which we sometimes derive directly from the subject of an artist's work is due to its inherent beauty, whereas in reality it is much more likely to be due to our personal preference for, or interest in, that subject.

As well as distinguishing the aesthetic experience from other incidental pleasures which a work of art may afford and from any purpose which the artist may wish to achieve by it, Schlegel does attempt a more precise description of the experience itself by saying that it arises when we become aware of the similarity between the work of art and its original in nature. But his achievement certainly does

1 Mind and Medium in Art. Contribution to a Symposium. Brit. Journal of Psychology, XI, 1920, p. 40.

not lie in this unsuccessful attempt at analysis, but firstly in the mere fact of having recognised the existence of a specifically aesthetic experience, and secondly in his rejection of the illusion theory as an explanation of it.

"Aesthetic illusion" had a great vogue in the eighteenth century and still has even to-day, and Schlegel's refusal to accept it as the basis of the aesthetic experience makes him stand out among his contemporaries and surpass many of his successors. The difficulty in dealing with the problem is due to the application of this same word "illusion" to completely different experiences. It can mean an optical illusion, a real deception of the senses, whereby one is led to believe that a statue is a living figure, or that the action on the stage is reality. The frequent references in writings of the seventeenth and eighteenth century to anecdotes in which men and animals were deceived by painting bear testimony to the fact that this belief was current. In any of these deceptions, through painting, statuary or drama, pleasure was supposed to arise when it was discovered that a mistake had been made and one marvelled at the skill which could thus deceive. This experience is of "illusion" in spite of oneself; one is passive and suffers the deception. It is clearly the kind of illusion which Gottsched frequently had in mind, particularly when he advocated such careful attention to costume and scenic effects that the spectator might forget that he is in a theatre.

But equally clearly it is not the kind of illusion of which Hebbel was thinking when he wrote in the preface to Judith that precisely such painful fidelity and attention to external details tends rather to disturb the illusion. Nor did Mendelssohn think of any actual deception of the senses when he wrote to Lessing that illusion can be experienced when a drama is read, and therefore has nothing to do with its production.¹ There is no question here of making a mistake. Whatever the state of the emotions, we are all the time aware with part of ourselves that we are in the theatre or reading a book, that this is a picture or a statue. What happens is that our emotional reaction is indistinguishable from our response to a similar situation, object or person in real life. In this kind of illusion, although we are carried away in spite of ourselves, we are in no sense the victim of a deception. The state is one of such absorption that it results in confusion with ordinary reality, and may even issue in clapping and cheering at the defeat of the villain, or spoken expressions of sympathy

1 Cf. above p. 103.

and indignation, as in Heine's story of the woman whose sympathy for Shylock was so strong that during the trial scene she was moved to exclaim: "The poor man is wronged!" Similarly the whole point of the play-scene in Hamlet rests on the assumption that through "the very cunning of the scene the guilty king will be moved to proclaim his guilt".

Again this cannot be what many modern writers on aesthetics mean when they use the term illusion, for they sometimes speak of a work of art being so naturalistic that it makes us forget the "illusion" and believe that we are confronted with reality. It is possible for them to speak in this way because they think that an essential feature of the aesthetic experience is "willing illusion" or "conscious self-deception".¹ Illusion in this context implies a deliberate abandonment to the spell of the work of art, and there is no question here of anything happening in spite of ourselves.

This last interpretation of illusion represents a great advance on the other two because it attempts to do justice to the element of awareness which is a feature of the aesthetic experience. But it is doubtful whether a true understanding of the nature of this experience can ever be achieved at all by operating with the idea of illusion, for, as Bullough says,² it is based upon a false opposition between art and reality and raises the whole problem of the genuineness of the emotions experienced when contemplating art. It is surely a much more fruitful line of approach to assume the reality of the world of art, and to recognise that all experience, whatever its nature, is equally real while it lasts. A nightmare, while it lasts, causes as much intensity of terror as any horrible event of our waking life. It is so "real" that it affects us physically and we wake up in a cold sweat. Only in retrospect do we assign it to the sphere of the unreal because it has no place in the continuity of our practical living. For the same reason we are often tempted to think of our experiences of art as unreal, whereas it is actually the quality of these experiences, and not their unreality, which makes them seem "different". When we witness a drama we do not in fact respond to fictitious persons and situations as though they were real,

1 This is, for instance, the view of K. Lange, Das Wesen der Kunst, Berlin, 1901, 1902. Cf. Bullough, 'Psychical Distance', ed. cit., p. 117.

2 Lectures, ed. cit., p. 33.

as the advocates of the illusion theory would have us believe. The drama, as long as it moves, is real enough to us, but our response to it is of a different nature from the responses of our ordinary life. It is different because, though extremely personal, it is yet free of any practical implication for us.¹ Any adequate description of the aesthetic state must, then, on the one hand do justice to the magic power of art to convince and move us with all the force of reality; on the other hand it must take into account that quality in our response which makes it different from all non-aesthetic responses. Both Kant's paradoxical formula "disinterested pleasure" and Schiller's definition of the essence of poetry as a combination of "Ernst und Spiel" represent efforts to do justice to this personal-impersonal nature of the aesthetic experience.

Schlegel too felt the need of some similar paradoxical formula to describe this state in which one is genuinely moved and yet at the same time pleasurable aware. It is not in his rejection of crude optical illusion as an explanation of aesthetic pleasure that he shews special insight; although, in thinking that the victim of such deception is more likely to be vexed than pleased, he is borne out by the findings of modern psychological aesthetics. Bullough, using an illustration very like Schlegel's, observes that life-size pictures, especially if they possess strong relief and their light happens to coincide with the actual lighting, can produce the impression of actual presence, and he points out that this is a far from pleasant illusion.² But Schlegel does shew very considerable insight in going further and denying that illusion of any kind plays a part in the aesthetic experience; and he is, I think, able to do this because he does not, like his contemporaries, doubt the reality of art. Since the discovery that one has been deceived is always unpleasant in reality, he sees no reason why it should be thought to be pleasant in connection with art. This is what the upholders of the illusion theory maintain. But deception can surely only be supposed to be pleasing in art and not elsewhere, if it is assumed that the emotions aroused by art are not genuine. And to this assumption Schlegel cannot subscribe. He thinks they are so genuine that if a work is too naturalistic it is liable to awaken emotions

1 Cf. Bullough, "Psychical Distance", ed. cit., pp. 88 ff.

2 "Psychical Distance", ed. cit., p. 105.

of such a kind that they disturb, or even completely destroy, aesthetic satisfaction. He recognises that people will probably object to this view and contend that art can produce no "real" emotions other than pleasure. He, however, is prepared to hazard the view that all emotions induced through the imagination may be as powerful as the so-called "real" ones, and is firmly convinced that certain arts - he clearly has drama in mind - do in fact arouse passions which are as real as any we ever experience.¹

In view of this belief in the reality of our emotional response to art, it is natural that he should maintain that the emotions aroused, however powerful, must always be consistent with our pleasure in the art. To be so carried away that the work is emotionally confused with reality can never bring satisfaction. The child who cries in the theatre is appeased by being told it was only make-believe, but the realisation brings no pleasure, and a naive adult would be in similar case. What is required for the aesthetic experience is a state in which we are rapt and absorbed and yet all the time aware of the art, and his phrase "eine Gefahr zu irren" is a valiant, if naive, attempt to find a neat formula which would embrace the apparently irreconcilable opposites of absorption and detachment.

Goethe felt the same need for paradox in describing the aesthetic experience. How strongly he felt it is proved by the remarks of the "artist's advocate" in the dialogue entitled Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke (1797). Replying to the spectator's objection that he is being over-subtle, he urges that in these matters one can never be subtle enough, and what it is impossible to express directly one may yet arrive at by way of antithesis. Asked whether he experiences deception at the opera, the spectator replies: "Getauscht, das Wort möchte ich nicht brauchen - und doch ja - und doch nein!" This, as the advocate observes, is more than a play upon words; it is a complete contradiction in terms. The description of his experience, which the spectator is finally induced to give, tallies very closely with Schlegel's "Gefahr zu irren"; for, though he would not care to call it deception, it is something closely akin to it, "eine Art derselben, etwas, das ganz nahe mit ihr verwandt ist".

1 Werke, III, pp. 154, 155; Ant., pp. 153, 154.

In categorically denying that there can be such a thing as "angenehmer Betrug", that is in denying that art and deception have anything to do with each other, Schlegel is also very close to Schiller when he claims in the 26. letter of the Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen that art must be "aufrichtig", a term which he explicitly defines as "the renunciation of all claims to reality". Schiller again voices this view in a letter to Goethe (24. August, 1798), urging that the artist should not only frankly and honestly depart from reality, but even draw our attention to the fact that he is doing it. Schlegel thinks that real aesthetic pleasure is afforded only by works, "wo die Kunst gleichsam hinter dieser Aehnlichkeit, die die nachgeahmte Sache mit der natürlichen hat, hervor schimmert, und macht, dass wir das Original, welches nachgeahmet ist, beständig mit dem Bilde zusammenhalten, niemals aber verwechseln können."¹ If we allow for the naïve formulation, which is frankly in terms of the imitation theory, this is surely what Schiller means when he says in the prologue to Wallenstein that art "die Täuschung, die sie schafft, aufrichtig selbst zerstört und ihren Schein der Wahrheit nicht betrüglich unter-schiebt".

It is his insistence that awareness of the artistry should be present all the time in the aesthetic experience that distinguishes Schlegel from Mendelssohn. Both are agreed that it is medium which prevents us from confusing art and reality; both are convinced that aesthetic pleasure depends on this ability to keep the two apart. As Mendelssohn says, in words very reminiscent of Schlegel's own: "Es gehören also folgende beide Urtheile dazu, wenn wir an einer Nachahmung Vergnügen finden wollen: 'dieses Bild gleicht dem Urbilde;' - 'dieses Bild ist nicht das Urbild selbst'".² But whereas Schlegel thinks that these two impressions coexist throughout the experience, forming, as it were, one complex psychical state, Mendelssohn thinks that they alternate. We are so carried away that we forget that it is art and not reality we are witnessing. That is to say, we experience complete illusion, from which we are then subsequently "recalled" by the "äussere und willkürliche Merkmale" of the art, by the difference between the medium of the imitation and that of the original in reality. During part of the experience we are, presumably, oblivious

1 Comödie in Versen, Werke, III, p. 78; Ant., p. 14.

2 Von der Illusion, Schriften, ed. cit., IV, 1, p. 44. Cf. Werke, III p. 133; Ant., pp. 131, 132.

of the stone, the canvas and paint, or the verse; but they are there to recall us to awareness, "so oft es nōthig ist".¹

To assume, as does Schlegel, that awareness does not thus alternate with illusion, but is present throughout the whole experience, is particularly fruitful for an art such as tragedy which always trembles on the knife-edge of a personal reaction. Its content of human passions, its vehicle of living human bodies, are both calculated to arouse emotions very akin to those which we experience in real life. More than any other art, tragedy may easily become a source of tension in which pain overpowers pleasure. Yet this must not be, as Schlegel realised full well. And he tries to express the difference between the appeal of tragedy and the appeal of similar persons and incidents of normal experience, by saying that, whatever our other reactions, the specific aesthetic pleasure, which springs from the essence of the art, must yet predominate. Critics who think that he advanced beyond his theory of pleasure when, in the later essays, he urged that any drama worth the name must move the spectators, are therefore wrong. They fail to see that, in art, being moved, and experiencing pleasure, are not mutually exclusive; that tragedy, like any other art, must give aesthetic satisfaction, and its own peculiar way of doing this is to arouse emotions in us. Caught in the naturalistic outlook as most of them are, they assume that drama, being a slice of life, will move us exactly as life does. Had they examined the text more closely, they would have discovered that in his last essay, in which he is supposed to have outgrown his theory of pleasure, Schlegel is still insistent that the passions called forth by tragedy must be "angenehme Leidenschaften". It is here that he makes the interesting observation that one needs to become accustomed to tragedy for it to have its proper effect. At first it may well appeal to unpoetic feelings, and the spectator has in a sense to become initiated. This predisposition which is necessary for the appreciation of tragedy is a point much stressed by modern aesthetics, and Bullough even goes so far as to say that every appreciation of whatever kind requires a certain experience and education in the matter to be appreciated.

The point to realise in any discussion of the effect of tragedy is that "the object of tragedy is pleasure, but only the pleasure of tragedy".² Even Gottsched was aware that the painful emotions aroused

1 Rhapsodie über die Empfindungen, ed. cit., I, p. 245.

2 B. Bosanquet, A History of Aesthetic, 2nd ed., London, 1904, p. 67.

by tragedy are not unpleasant. But his attempts to explain the apparent paradox turn on the egoistic feeling of relief that all these terrible things are fortunately happening to someone else, and that is an eminently practical approach. Schlegel at least makes an aesthetic approach by realising that it is not a question of pleasure being "added" to emotions which are exactly the same as those of ordinary life, but that the emotions themselves have a different quality, that they are the same and yet different. He is naturally not able to give a psychological explanation of this. It would seem that in the aesthetic experience the full circle of normal behaviour is not completed. Instead of being stimulated to action, which may take the form of physical movement, speech, judgement or decision, and experiencing emotion as an accompanying phenomenon, a kind of side-line subordinate to the activity, the final stage of action is inhibited, cut short; we remain sunk in contemplation of the object without doing anything about it, and emotion moves from its subordinate position to take possession of the field of consciousness. This is why in the aesthetic experience we are so much more keenly aware of our emotions than at any other time. And this is why they have a different quality; they have been cleared of the practical, concrete nature of their appeal without thereby losing their original character. Hence the events and characters of drama appeal to us like the persons and incidents of normal experience, except that that side of their appeal which would usually affect us in a directly personal manner, is held in abeyance. Heine probably did not realise what an "aesthetic" compliment he paid Goethe when, contrasting his plays with Schiller's, he said of them: "Sie bringen nie die That hervor".

Now, although Schlegel could perceive nothing of all this, his rejection of the didactic function of art and his refusal to admit any kind of illusion of reality into the aesthetic experience, both point to a desire to stress the non-practical appeal of art. And indeed his explanation of the way aesthetic pleasure arises, inadequate as it may be, points in the same direction too. To be struck by the convincing likeness to reality, while all the time aware that it is a work of art and different from reality, means that one is lost in contemplation of the art, and not responding in a blindly personal way. And it may not be without significance that, although he spent all his spare time over a period of twelve years in the study of dramatic problems, he never once embarks on the ticklish problem of catharsis. He makes the general statement that the function of tragedy is to arouse and "improve" the passions, but nowhere does he enter into the question of how this improvement is to be effected. What

he does constantly stress is that there is no need for drama to bring home moral lessons to us. Enough if it enables us to see more deeply into human passions than we should otherwise ever be able to do, if, by moving the heart and the imagination, it makes us more sensitive, more refined, more aware. This, together with his fear that uninitiated spectators may respond directly to the content of tragedy and experience feelings of a kind not proper to art at all, may mean that he suspected the usual interpretation of catharsis and preferred to leave the question open until he had arrived at some more satisfactory conclusion. For catharsis can surely only mean the feeling of calm satisfaction experienced at the end of a tragedy. And this must be due to the rounding-off, but the rounding-off inherent in all art and not peculiar to tragedy alone. The tragedian poses, or should pose, no questions of right or wrong to be solved by the issue of his tragedy, nor leave the spectator puzzling over a solution for himself. He should neither justify, nor even raise the question of, the ways of God to man. The rounding-off is non-moral and arises from the forms of drama. We embark with the poet on an adventure of passion, we are rent and torn, but without the necessity of acting upon our emotions. Our experience, our personality become thereby deepened, intensified, widened, and at the end we are calm because of the pattern introduced into events by the artist; because of all the parallelism, the foreshadowing and echoing of motifs, the symmetrical rise and fall of emotion, the architectural beauty of construction, because of every device of rhyme and rhythm. Schlegel is so aware of the forms of drama, of the way in which it selects only what is relevant, links together what belongs, throws into relief the significant and rounds off the whole, that he may perhaps have been on the way to discovering that the "improvement" effected by tragedy is one which it shares with all the arts and one which arises from its forms and not from its content at all.

All this, however, is merely a matter for speculation. What is certain is that Schlegel is so concerned that art shall evoke the right kind of response that he suggests various measures which the artist should take to ensure that it does not fail to do so. These involve deviations from reality other than those imposed by requirements of the medium, and the important thing to notice is that he does not advocate that these departures should take the form of omission, of selection from reality, but of toning down the naturalistic impression. In touching on this problem, Schlegel touches on one which is at the very core of art. It is a question of establishing and preserving the desired relation between the recipient

and the work of art, a relation of extreme delicacy in which the balance can easily be upset. The problem was a matter of constant discussion between Goethe and Schiller, and most writers on art and aesthetics since then have been aware of it. The best analysis of it is that by Edward Bullough, who elucidates and illustrates a principle of "psychical distance" which can be applied not only to this, but to many other problems of art and beauty.¹ Bullough does not ignore the factors of spatial and temporal distance but he thinks that these are particular cases of the general psychological concept. "Distance" in general is effected by cutting off the normal or economic relations of life and so allowing a new reaction to take their place. The object of contemplation is "distanced" from our practical, personal self. One important point that Bullough makes is that there must be a limit to the psychological distance between us and the work of art. If the theatre, for instance, give too much realism, it would cease to appeal to the artistic emotions of the audience and would speak directly to their human and personal emotions. But if it does not give enough, it may have no appeal, for it may fail to move at all. Whether, in the contemplation of art, the right degree of distance is achieved and maintained will depend partly on the work, partly on ourselves. Special factors in either can prevent it or destroy it. Now the reactions of the individual are so varied and incalculable, and depend so much on personal peculiarities and associations that no rigid conclusions can be drawn concerning the distancing powers of the public as a whole. But the conditions in the work of art which are likely to affect distance are at least subject to the artist's control, and there is general agreement that there are certain aspects of life and things which can only be touched upon by art with special precautions. Bullough thinks it safe to infer that explicit reference to organic affections, to the material existence of the body, especially to sexual matters, lie normally below the distance-limit; that allusions to social institutions of any degree of personal importance - in particular allusions implying any doubt as to their validity - the questioning of some generally recognised ethical sanctions, references to topical subjects occupying public attention at the moment, and such like are all dangerously near the average limit.

It is when we examine Schlegel's views in the light of a modern theory such as this that we realise the extent of his understanding of art and of the aesthetic attitude. It is not merely that he

1 'Psychical Distance', ed. cit.

mentions many of the points dealt with by Bullough, but rather his realisation that they are all interconnected and form part of one general problem. Although he formulates no general psychological principle, and although he is hampered by his clumsy terminology, Schlegel realises very clearly that the difficulty is to maintain the delicate balance of a certain relation between the recipient and the work of art, and that certain things are likely to upset it.

Schlegel acknowledges that the desired response to a work of art is dependent on two sets of conditions, those obtaining in the work and those obtaining in the recipient. But, since the latter are outside the control of the artist and can only be regarded by him as a matter of chance, he decides to ignore them. He does, indeed, give one example which shews that he is on the right track, but it is couched in such general terms that it scarcely touches the heart of the problem. When Goethe writes to Schiller (17. Sept. 1803) that he has doubts as to the wisdom of sending his Natürliche Tochter to Humboldt, who had just lost a child, it is because he fears that the similarity in the dramatic situation may prevent him from appreciating the poetic quality of the work. Because of his emotional condition it was likely that Humboldt might be incapable of the necessary degree of distance, and, realising this Goethe asks "soll man sich vor dem stoffartigen Eindruck fürchten?" This precise reference to the relation of one particular individual to one particular work is a real example of loss of distance. But when Schlegel imagines a man passing unmoved through a picture gallery because of the troubles with which he is afflicted, he is touching on the more general problem of our incapacity to appreciate art at all in certain moods.

The artist has a measure of control, however, over the other set of conditions which affect distance, namely those in the work of art, and Schlegel devotes considerable attention to subjects which require careful treatment if they are not to provoke the wrong kind of response. He does not actually use the word distance except in its literal sense of spatial or temporal distance, but he observes that the emotional effect of these is often the opposite of what the physical fact would lead us to expect. In sentences which have a rhythmic beauty unusual in the period, he says: "Die Zeit, die den Ruhm der Menschen, wenn er geringe ist, noch mehr verringert, wenn er aber gross ist, vermehret und höher hebt, hat diese Helden in unsern Gedanken weit über ihr gewöhnliches Maas vergrössert. Ihr Menschliches, ist an ihnen gestorben, und ihr Göttliches lebt allein noch in unsrem Angedenken; und es lebet."

nicht nur, sondern es hat auch von der Zeit, die sonst nichts unverzehrt lässt, seinen Zusatz erhalten. Entfernte Dinge verkleinern sich vor unsern Augen, aber entfernte Helden sehen in unsern Gedanken allezeit grösser aus."¹ Because distance lends a certain stature, it is often necessary, Schlegel thinks, to transfer the scene of a play to some other country when treating contemporary persons or events. He fully realises the difficulties involved in portraying anything which is too close to the spectator, and here he again differs sharply from Lessing who, with his insistence on illusion and his failure to distinguish a specific aesthetic experience, did not grasp that this constituted a problem at all (Dram. 79). Modern critics, however, bear out Schlegel's view which, as has already been noted, was also Racine's. Bullough writes that, generally speaking, the conduct of our contemporaries concerns too closely our personal interests to allow of a full aesthetic appreciation,² and in a penetrating analysis of the way in which Aeschylus was able to make so recent an event as the defeat of the Persians into a triumph of tragedy, Prof. Macgregor observes that, without the aid of Time's powerful hand, the artist cannot hope so to remove his audience from their own terrific and pathetic experiences that they become for them fit and proper material for a tragic drama.³

This is Schlegel's only reference to the difficulty of treating topical events in literature. The other things which he mentions as likely to weaken or destroy the desired impression by giving rise to non-aesthetic emotions are of a more physical kind: ugliness "das Ekelhafte" and, in the theatre, portrayals of nakedness, madness or death, and anything which might offend against propriety. According to Bullough, all these lie normally below the distance-limit and can only be touched upon by art with special precautions,⁴ so that Schlegel is right in singling them out for special consideration. He would also seem to be right in one other important point, namely in observing that the arts vary in the degree of naturalism each may attempt. He is in agreement with Bullough when he thinks that painting may attempt the most or, as the modern critic puts it, this art can venture to approach more closely to the normal distance-limit than any other.

1 Werke, III, p. 171; Ant., pp. 99, 100.

2 Lectures, ed. cit., p. 78.

3 Studies and Diversions in Greek Literature, ed. cit., p. 10.

4 "Psychical Distance", ed. cit., p. 95.

He is equally in agreement with him in putting drama at the other end of the scale and in his reason for doing so. "Theatrical performances run a special risk of a loss of Distance owing to the material presentation of the subject-matter. The physical presence of living human beings ... is a difficulty which no art has to face in the same way."¹ Schiller, in a letter to Goethe (Dec. 23 - 27, 1797), speaks of the peculiar difficulties of dramatic art which make it necessary for the dramatist to distance the reality which forces itself upon us if we are to respond in the right way. Altogether it is amazing how Schlegel's views point forward beyond those of his contemporaries and immediate successors and anticipate the attitude to art at the end of the century. The general policy which prevailed when he was writing was the complete rejection of any theme or subject which was felt to be unsuitable for art. The suitability, or lack of it, was thought to be in the raw material itself. Schlegel, however, would have agreed with Schiller when he wrote to Goethe (7. Sept. 1797): "das Gemeine oder Geistreiche kann ich auch hier, wie überall, nur in der Behandlung, nicht in der Wahl des Stoffes finden." How strongly he opposed his contemporaries in this respect is shown by the way in which he tackled the Lucretia theme. A certain Koppe had written a play on this subject and sent it to Gottsched who maintained that the theme as such was incapable of dramatic treatment and consequently refused to publish the drama. Schlegel was of a quite different opinion. He admitted all the difficulties of the theme but claimed that they were not insuperable if the dramatist were careful in his choice of the moment at which the action should begin, and if he endowed the heroine with a dignity which would lift her above her misfortune. He set to work to prove this by writing a play himself.² We have here a proof of the close relation between his theory and his practice. He would have shown here by example how a recalcitrant "Stoff" may be distanced, and treated so that it calls forth emotions appropriate to tragedy.

When his contemporaries were not advocating selection from nature, they were urging extreme naturalism in the treatment of what had been selected. They were able to accept this paradox with equanimity because, unlike Schlegel, they thought that pleasure in art arose directly from the "Stoff", and not from what this became in the hands of the artist.

1 Ibid., pp. 97, 98.

2 See Werke, II, p. 4.

Hence Mylius, Gottsched's disciple, instructs the actor who has to die on the stage, to imitate nature closely by his broken speech, his facial expressions and his gestures.¹ How differently Schlegel would have him proceed was noted in Chapter II. This description of an artistic presentation of death upon the stage is the most precise account he gives of how toning-down or distancing might be achieved, and it must have made a considerable impression on those who read it, for it is not only repeated by Mendelssohn,² but later in the century by Engel in his Ideen zu einer Mimik,³ and it echoes too in a number of the Litteratur- und Theater-Zeitung in 1779.⁴ The problem of the representation of death in art fascinated the eighteenth century. It is well known that Lessing shewed how the Greeks symbolised it by the genius of sleep, and this is the aspect of it which is stressed by Schlegel too. But the chief merit of Schlegel's analysis of the problem is his demand that the actor should create a death of his own, a death unlike any which we know from reality. For, in making such a demand, he goes as far towards recognising the autonomy of the world of art as it is possible to go while remaining within the bounds of the imitation theory. The article in the Litteratur- und Theater-Zeitung clinches Schlegel's argument with the phrase: "Man muss nicht auf dem Theater sterben wie im Hospital"; and the pertinence of this question in any revolt against naturalism appears from the almost identical phrasing used by the expressionist Paul Kornfeld: "Muss der Schauspieler auf der Bühne sterben, so gehe er nicht vorher ins Krankenhaus, um sterben zu lernen ..."⁵

The apparent conventionality of the examples which Schlegel adduces to illustrate this process of 'distancing' should not be allowed to obscure the principle at stake. The relation of the recipient to the work of art is a variable one, depending very much on current ideas of seemliness, on the customs, manners, and general feeling of an age. To an Elizabethan audience, accustomed to the

1 C.B., St. 30, VII (Vol. 8).

2 Schriften, ed. cit., IV, 2 pp. 16 ff.

3 J. J. Engel, Ideen zu einer Mimik, Berlin, 1785, I, pp. 48, 49.

4 Litteratur- und Theater-Zeitung, July 24, 1779, pp. 469 ff.

5 Cited by Hans Naumann, Die deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart, Stuttgart, 1924, p. 108.

horrors of criminal justice, the blinding of Gloucester on the stage might well have appeared natural and proper. But it has been condemned almost universally in more recent times as liable to arouse sensations so violent as to overpower the purely tragic emotions. We may feel that Schlegel is unduly afraid lest offences against seemliness (*Wohlstand*) disturb the aesthetic impression. But, as Granville Barker observes when discussing the inclusion of Shakespeare's more obscene jokes in a modern performance,¹ it all depends on the public manners of the time. If the reaction of a modern audience is a sense of discomfort or embarrassment instead of amusement, then the joke has obviously missed its point; and to disturb an aesthetic experience for the sake of pedantic fidelity to Shakespeare's text, is to sacrifice the greater to the lesser. By the same token, the validity of the principle which Schlegel established is not affected by the examples he takes; and, as he himself deplored in the early letter to his brother, the age in which he lived happened to be particularly squeamish.

Already Gottsched had wondered whether there was not a limit to the degree of terror which dramatic performances might legitimately call forth, but had resignedly concluded: "Wie hoch aber der Grad dieses Schreckens gehen könne, das ist meines Wissens weder bereits bestimmt, noch so leicht zu bestimmen ..."² And it would indeed have been difficult for him to determine the limit, since he did not recognise a specific aesthetic experience. Schlegel, on the other hand, could answer the question by saying that the emotions may be as violent as you like so long as the work still gives 'pleasure'. When it ceases to do this, when we begin to react to the events of the drama as if they were events of ordinary life, when we experience what he calls 'true' instead of 'pleasurable' sadness, then the work has gone too far to merit the name of art.

The aesthetic experience according to Schlegel can thus only be ensured by departure from reality. But as a firm believer in the imitation theory he demands as close adherence to nature as is consistent with the desired impression. A play, should be as natural as possible, 'so lange es noch vergnügt'. Is this not a more naive formulation of the principle, referred to above,³ that there must be

1 H. Granville Barker, Prefaces to Shakespeare, London, 1927, Introduction, p. XXXVIII.

2 Preface to Schaubühne, ed. cit., vol. VI.

3 p. 196.

a limit to the degree of distance? If there were not, art would become artificiality and cease to move and convince. Schlegel believes that one important way of retaining as much naturalism as possible in drama, while yet achieving an artistic effect, is to use the medium of verse. Because of its unifying harmony, the spectator will not confuse even the most life-like representation of reality with reality itself, and hence will not respond in the wrong way. Verse will, in other words, ensure that the play does not call forth "einen nicht poetischen Ernst", as Schiller described it to Goethe (8. May, 1798), in reply to the latter's announcement that he was casting some of the prose scenes of Faust into verse in order to mitigate "die unmittelbare Wirkung des ungeheuren Stoffes" (5. May, 1798). Schlegel, in advocating verse for comedy, is, in fact, in complete accord with Goethe's somewhat provocative statement that all dramatic works, "und vielleicht Lustspiel und Farce zuerst", should be in verse (to Schiller, 25. Nov. 1797). Similarly, in order to avoid any danger of descending to the trivial, Schiller categorically declares that anything transcending the commonplace should be expressed "in gebundener Schreibart" (to Goethe 24. Nov. 1797).

Schlegel was equally opposed to triviality in dramatic language. He would have agreed with Schiller's defence of the loquaciousness of his characters; the use of fewer words might be more in accordance with reality; "aber das Beispiel der Alten, welche es auch so gehalten haben und in demjenigen was Aristoteles die Gesinnungen und Meinungen nennt gar nicht wortkarg gewesen sind, scheint auf ein höheres poetisches Gesetz hinzudeuten, welches eben hierin eine Abweichung von der Wirklichkeit erfordert" (to Goethe, 24. Aug. 1798). Schlegel was just as aware as Schiller that the loquaciousness of tragic characters and their intellectual awareness even at the height of emotion are opposed to reality, and, like him, points to the example of the Greeks in support of his contention that they should nevertheless be retained as a feature of tragedy. But whereas Schiller explains it as the result of a "poetic law" which demands such departure from reality, Schlegel here falls right out of the aesthetic sphere and tries to explain the phenomenon by reference to reality. It is the mark of the great character, he thinks, that he is always able to analyse his emotions and to express himself clearly and beautifully. He admits that we may be conscious that this idea of highly-placed persons is a wrong one, but maintains that our imagination nevertheless clings to it, and that it is therefore to be imitated by art. It is, of course, to his credit that his feeling for the thought content of tragedy was true enough to make him admire and defend something which was constantly being attacked. But it is a pity that he, who

was otherwise so willing to accept the conventions of art with such clearly aesthetic reasoning, should here fail to recognise a convention when he saw it. The passage in which he says that a lovely thought is far more effective than "ein ewiges O! und ach!"¹ is very similar to a passage in Mein Wort über das Drama, where Hebbel contrasts the transparency of art with the indifference of life as to whether, or how, it is understood, and says that the latter may hence content itself with "Ach und O ... einer Miene, einer Bewegung", while the former demands a clear analysis of emotions from even the most extrovert characters. One wonders why Schlegel could not have concluded with Hebbel that the reason for this is to be sought in art itself. Since he was so clearly convinced that neither soliloquy nor the use of verse can be condemned on the mere ground that they are 'unnatural', why could he not accept the corollary that no dramatic language is 'natural'? Perhaps his failure was due to the respect which, as an adherent of the imitation theory, he accorded to reality as the raw material of art. When Schiller writes: "mein Stoff unterwirft sich mir immer mehr" (to Goethe, 11 Jan. 1797), he too expresses respect for the "Stoff". It is recalcitrant and only to be subdued with difficulty, but subdued it must be, subjected completely to the artist's control. Schlegel's respect, however, is of a different kind. For him the artist is still only craftsman, not self-conscious creator, and it is tentatively and with humility that he suggests deviations from reality, feeling all the time the temerity of such suggestions.

We may say, then, that Schlegel formulates an important principle of art, namely that it does differ from reality, that there is a point beyond which art may not go in its attempt to represent reality. But the corollary of this - that art is under no compulsion to be co-ordinated with reality at all, that it is free to develop in its own terms, he does not state. And indeed he could not do so. Within the limits of the imitation theory he goes as far towards an understanding of art as it is possible to go. To go further would be to destroy its very premises. The recurrent attraction of these premises as the basis of a theory of art is proved by the appearance, as late as 1901, of K. Lange's Das Wesen der Kunst² which is admittedly based on the principle of a modified imitation of nature. Attention has already

1 Werke, III, pp. 235, 236; Ant., p. 186.

2 ed. cit.

been drawn by M. Schenker¹ to the similarity between Lange's theories and those of Schlegel, and the likeness does indeed extend even into details. Thus Schlegel points out that in painting and sculpture everything depends on a clear optical impression and not on the accuracy of the imitation. It would therefore be foolish to paint things so small, or in such a position, that they cannot be recognised, "ob sie gleich mit der Natur übereinkommen".² Lange puts the same thought in the following way: "Man sieht daran wieder einmal ganz deutlich, dass es nicht auf eine objektive Übereinstimmung der Kunst mit der Natur, sondern auf eine Reproduktion ihrer optischen Wirkungen ankommt. Wir verlangen von der Kunst nicht, dass sie das darstellt, was objektiv im statistischen Sinne wirklich in der Natur vorhanden ist ..."³ Schenker is right in thinking it a proof of Schlegel's achievement that a theory so akin to his could still be accepted a century and a half after his death; but he is surely wrong when he suggests that Lange's idea of "conscious illusion" is identical with Schlegel's "eine Gefahr zu irren". As was noted above, illusion of any kind implies the unreality of art, and in rejecting it Schlegel seems to me to go beyond Lange despite other striking similarities.

It is just this point too which distinguishes him from Mendelssohn to whom he is otherwise so close. Mendelssohn, as we saw, adopts Schlegel's term "Materie" to denote medium; he commends his essay Von der Unähnlichkeit in der Nachahmung⁴ and develops Schlegel's idea of toning-down whatever is likely to affect us so closely as to disturb the aesthetic impression.⁵ Especially in what he has to say about "das Ekelhafte" he is very close to Schlegel, even in the wording; he adopts his example of death when discussing the art of acting and follows him in condemning attempts to convey visual images in music.⁶ But in continuing to operate with the term illusion he

1 Charles Batteux und seine Nachahmungstheorie in Deutschland. Untersuchungen zur neueren Sprach- und Literaturgeschichte, Neue Folge, II, Leipzig, 1909, p. 60.

2 Werke, III, p. 138; Ant., p. 137.

3 ed. cit., II, p. 245.

4 Schriften, ed. cit., IV, 2, p. 13.

5 Op. cit., I, pp. 240 ff. Cf. IV, 1, p. 92.

6 Op. cit., I, pp. 292 - 295.

differs from him, and Schlegel, with his "Gefahr zu irren", his view that awareness must coexist with being absorbed and moved, would have been more at home towards the end of the century. We already noted the similarity to Goethe's description of the aesthetic experience in Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke. There are other points in that essay which remind one of Schlegel's views. It is a defence of the "unnaturalness" of opera. Schlegel too defended this art-form, using the same arguments which he had used in his defence of comedy in verse, and deliberately linking up both with a justification of the conventions of art in general.¹ Nor is his method unlike Goethe's. He does not, it is true, use the dialogue form, but step by step he forces the reader to admit the many "improbabilities" of art and shews how closely these are linked with the satisfaction it gives, how the satisfaction indeed depends precisely upon these differences between art and reality. Goethe's dialogue contains too similar arguments against realistic stage-decoration, costume and acting.

How well Schlegel's views fit in with those which generally prevailed towards the end of the century is further borne out both by the article on the presentation of death in the Litteratur- und Theater-Zeitung,² already referred to, and by an article on illusion in Reichard's Theater-Kalender for the year 1780.³ Here we find the same arguments against the complete similarity of a work of art with its original in nature, with the same example of painted marble; the same protest against naturalistic décor; the same comment that many a drama would be too painful if it were not toned down and made unlike life; the same observation that nature provides no standard of criticism for dramatic language, since all kinds of characters speak good German and pour forth similes and metaphors in a way that similar people in real life would never do.

The strongest argument for those who would defend the conventions of art, its formal qualities, its departure from nature, is clearly to ask: "If art is merely an imitation of nature, why have art at all?" If its purpose is only to reproduce the same impressions which we get from reality itself, then there is no need for art, for reality we have

1 Vorrede zu "Der Ruhmredige". Ant., pp. 163, 164.

2 op. cit., p. 470.

3 Von der Täuschung, Theater-Kalender auf das Jahr 1780. ed. cit., pp. 3 ff.

always with us. In Germany Feind voiced this view at the beginning of the eighteenth century when he urged that people who want to see something quite natural should go to the great stage of the world, not to the little one of opera and drama;¹ Goethe echoed it at the end of the century when he said that opera creates a little world of its own which must be judged by its own laws.² The same truth is expressed by Schlegel in the following way:

"Wie kann man aber, wirft man mir ein, sagen, dass etwas einer Sache ähnlich ist, dessen Vorbild niemals gefunden wird, niemals gewesen ist, und zu keinen Zeiten seyn wird? Wie kann man aber, antworte ich, diese Unähnlichkeit tadeln; ... da sie allein fähig ist, uns die Neugierigkeit zu belohnen, derentwegen wir eine Satyre lesen oder den Schauplatz besuchen, da wir, wenn entweder die Comödie dem gemeinen Leben, oder das gemeine Leben der Comödie vollkommen ähnlich seyn sollte, entweder in der Comödie einschlafen, oder im gemeinen Leben uns beständig aus dem Athem lachen müssten; kurz da wir das Vergnügen, das wir daraus schöpfen, nicht geniessen könnten, wenn der Comödienschreiber von dem Wahren nicht ein wenig abgewichen wäre."³

The real defence of the "Unähnlichkeiten", Schlegel thinks, is that they even contribute to the convincing effect. Art, by departing from nature, appears, paradoxically enough, more convincing than nature itself, or, as Schlegel puts it: in the greatest art the "Unähnlichkeit" itself seems to be "Ähnlichkeit".⁴ Thus does Schlegel stumble, as it were, by accident, upon what Hebbel calls "das gefährlichste Geheimnis der Kunst". In this realisation that the virtue of art consists in its very difference from nature, he is really expressing in the only terms which were available to him within the imitation theory, what the modern aesthetician means when he writes: "The work is not like nature and yet it is beautiful in virtue of its very departure from nature."⁵

1 Cf. Above p. 9.

2 Über Wahrheit und Wahrscheinlichkeit der Kunstwerke.

3 Unähnlichkeit, (Werke, III, p. 173; Ant., p. 102).

4 Ibid., p. 176; Ant., p. 105.

5 Thorburn, op. cit., p. 129.

CONCLUSION

"Das Genie ... begreift, dass Kunst eben darum Kunst heisse, weil sie nicht Natur ist," said Goethe in the Wanderjahre,¹ and it is true that artistic genius may always have understood this intuitively. But theorists who tried to understand the nature of art did not find it so easy to accept. And yet without such acceptance a science of aesthetics could scarcely come into being. Nor was it, as is often thought, merely a question of overthrowing the theory of imitation of nature before such a conclusion could be reached. As a reaction against this traditional view there did appear the new idea of art as 'expression' or 'creation'. But expression of what, and creation by what? The answer to both questions was 'Imagination'. But this is no answer, for imagination can create and express many things, but they need not necessarily be art. 'Creation', as a theory of art, supplied a corrective to imitation, but it was not an adequate substitute for it. No clear picture of the progress towards an understanding of art can be obtained by merely thinking of the one as an advance over the other, by imagining that 'creation' simply ousted 'imitation' and took its place. The outlines are not so clearly-drawn as that, and the balance in the relation between the two lies differently.

In Germany in the eighteenth century we can distinguish two streams of development among those who approach the question of art. And the terms into which the opposition resolves itself are not by any means merely 'imitation' and 'creation'. Much more profound is the distinction between those who confuse Art and Life and those who recognise the essential difference between them. The one stream

1 Bk. II, Chapt. 8.

includes, despite all their obvious differences, Gottsched, Bodmer, and Breitinger, Lessing, Klopstock and the Stürmer und Dränger. These are concerned, either with the content of art, stressing its subservience to reality; or with genius and imagination, failing, however, to distinguish the specifically artistic genius or to discover the mark of the peculiarly artistic imagination. The other stream, represented chiefly by J. E. Schlegel and Moses Mendelssohn, stresses the difference between art and reality, and is interested both in its non-naturalistic forms and in the specifically aesthetic nature of its effects.

Neither the one stream nor the other could, in itself, provide a complete account of art or of artistic creation. The first was more important for the actual development of poetry, revolting as it often did, against traditional forms and against the conception of the artist as mere imitator. The efforts of the Sturm und Drang to infuse poetry with new warmth and life, to make room in it for passion and fancy, to turn the attention from objects imitated to the expression of emotions engendered in the poet, cannot be overestimated. This feeling for ardour and vitality had, moreover, considerable value in fertilising and vivifying theoretical writing about poetry and art. But the Stürmer und Dränger are mainly concerned with fine frenzy in general, and not with the fine frenzy peculiar to the poet. And it is at this point, it seems to me, that the other stream shews its value and reveals itself as equally important for a complete understanding of the nature of art. Development seems, indeed, to proceed through the pull and thrust of the two tendencies, until finally they were fused.

For this, two things were necessary. Those who stressed the differences between art and reality always spoke as though these were consciously and deliberately introduced by the artist to produce a desired effect. It had to be realised that this unlikeness is already present in the artist's vision, largely because of the influence of his medium upon his imagination. On the other hand, those who concerned themselves with creation and imagination failed to distinguish between imagination in general and artistic imagination in particular. Here again it had to be realised that the peculiar nature of the artist's imagination is, to a very great extent, determined by his medium. Thus medium is seen as the possible point of contact between the two approaches, as the factor which could effect a fusion between them, and lead to a conception of the nature

of art which might furnish a more satisfactory account of the creative process and embrace both the representational as well as the formal tendencies of art. In some measure this fusion is effected by Schiller and Goethe, who had been through the passionate and vital experiences of the Genie movement, and yet, being essentially artists, were increasingly interested in the forms of their art. In fusing the two streams they avoid, on the one hand, that confusion of feeling in general with artistic feeling, which was the error of the Sturm und Drang; on the other, that mechanical conception of the artistic process which runs through the writings of Schlegel and Mendelssohn. On to passionate feeling they graft the idea of the unlikeness of art to reality, thus transferring this from the deliberate working-out stage to the conception stage.

Schlegel's chief merit is that he tried to keep clear what was in danger of being confused. He championed the forms of art, recognising that without these it has no existence. His contribution is to that stream which stresses the right of art to non-naturalistic expression, and he realises how closely this right is linked with the fact of medium. But he does not, of course, see the part which medium plays in the artist's imagination, for he is not concerned with the imagination at all, but only with the completed works of art and with art-forms.

We can the better appreciate the peak reached by Goethe and Schiller if we have a clear understanding of the beginning made by Schlegel. But the chief difficulty encountered when we embark on a study of his works is that of language. The naiveté and clumsiness of it hang like a cloud, veiling the true significance of the thought. But the relation between thought and language is so close that it is almost impossible to think of them separately, and even to-day, in writing about aesthetics, the need is often felt to use language in a new way. In Schlegel's day the German language was unformed and wanted handling; for every thought which struggles for expression and achieves it, makes the instrument a little less blunt. Schlegel's thought has to struggle continually with his recalcitrant, unpliant medium, which so often refuses to take the exact shape of his ideas. Because of this, interpretation is necessary. But only one thing justifies such interpretation, and that is the coherence of thought revealed by it. When we have penetrated the obscurity of the language, we find that there is no need to reconcile discrepancies of thought or to resolve contradictions. The singleness of direction is apparent. Every conclusion points the same way. Every critical judgement is informed by the same view of art. This is even the case when his reasoning breaks down; his feeling remains right. Indeed one may say of his work in general, that his perception of what is right is frequently in advance of his power to account for it. Thus we find him deeply moved

by the character of Electra, but unable adequately to explain why. He rightly maintains that a poet is justified in using verse as a medium for comedy, but his reasoning during the course of the argument is sometimes faulty. He is not willing to reject the unities indiscriminately, for they are used with effect in plays which command all his admiration; but he does not quite reach the point where he can maintain openly and with confidence that they are suitable for one kind of drama only. In the tragedies which he loves and admires, the characters make long, self-explanatory speeches and have an awareness of the processes of thought and emotion which is incompatible with complete naturalism. Schlegel's feeling is so sure that he defends this aspect of tragedy, but for the wrong reasons. Even early, when his views on form were still narrow, he was acutely sensitive to dramatic power, and was won over, despite irregularities, by the sheer vitality of Shakespeare and Gryphius. Finally, he is able to recognise a distinctive experience resulting from the contemplation of art, without being able to analyse it at all satisfactorily. In fact, of Schlegel may be said what Schiller said of his younger self when he revised the essay Über Bürgers Gedichte: "sein Gefühl war richtiger als sein Raisonnement."

Chronological list of Schlegel's writings on dramatic and aesthetic theory.

- 1739 Auszug eines Briefs, welcher einige kritische Anmerkungen über die Trauerspiele der Alten und Neuern enthält. First printed in Werke, 3, 1764.
- 1740 Commentary to his translation of Sophocles' Electra. First printed in Theatralische Werke, Coppenhagen, 1747. Reprinted in Werke, I, 1761.
- Schreiben an den Herrn N. N. über die Comödie in Versen. First printed in Beyträge zur critischen Historie ... Bd. VI., St. 24, 1740.
- 1741 Herodes der Kindermörder, nach Art eines Trauerspieles ausgebildet und in Nürnberg einer teutschliebenden Gemeine vorgestellt, durch Johann Klaj. Nürnberg, 1645. First printed in C.B., Bd. VII, St. 26, 1741. Reprinted in Werke, 3.
- Demokritus, ein Todtengespräche. First printed in Die Belustigungen des Verstandes und des Witzes, Bd. I, Augustmonat, 1741. Reprinted in Werke 3.
- Vergleichung Shakespears und Andreas Gryphs bey Gelegenheit des Versuchs einer gebundenen Uebersetzung von dem Tode des Julius Cäsar, aus den Englischen Werken des Shakespear. Berlin 1741. First printed in C.B., Bd., VII, St. 28, 1741. Reprinted in Werke, 3.
- Abhandlung, dass die Nachahmung der Sache, der man nachahmet, zuweilen unähnlich werden müsse. First printed in Neue Beyträge zum Vergnügen des Verstandes und Witzes, Bd., I, St. 5, 1745. Reprinted in Werke, 3.
- 1742 Abhandlung von der Nachahmung. First printed thus: 1 - 15 in C.B., Bd., VIII, St. 29, 1742; 16 - 21 in C.B., Bd. VIII, St. 31, 1743; 22 - 24 in Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste, Bd. I, St. 5, 1745. Reprinted in Werke, 3.
- 1745 Vorrede des Uebersetzers zu Der Ruhmredige, Ein Lustspiel in Versen. Aus des Herrn Destouches Französichen Übersetzt. Leipzig, 1745. Not included by J. H. Schlegel in the works but reprinted by Antoniewicz (see below).
- 1747 Vorrede zu Theatralische Werke Durch Johann Elias Schlegel. Coppenhagen, 1747. Reprinted, with omissions, in Werke, 3 under the title Von der Würde und Majestät des Ausdrucks im Trauerspiele.
- Schreiben von Errichtung eines Theaters in Kopenhagen. First printed in Werke, 3.
- Gedanken zur Aufnahme des dänischen Theaters. First printed in Werke, 3.

Johann Elias Schlegels Werke herausgegeben von J. H. Schlegeln.
5 Bde. Kopenhagen und Leipzig im Verlage der Mummischen Buch-
handlung. 1761 - 1770.

Johann Elias Schlegels Aesthetische und Dramaturgische Schriften
ed. Johann von Antoniewicz, 1887. Deutsche Litteraturdenkmale
des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts, 26. Antoniewicz includes all
the above works except the Schreiben von Errichtung eines
Theaters in Kopenhagen. He gives convincing reasons for the
inclusion among Schlegel's works of the preface to the translation
of Destouches' Le Glorieux.

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Einrichtung der Fabel zu beobachten gemacht. Ich gestehe, dass ich gerne eine Tragödie aus dem Sophokles ausgelesen hätte, darinnen die Moral noch schöner wäre, wie mir denn der Philoktetes, wegen des grossen Fleisses und der vielen Kunst, damit die Charaktere des Ulysses und Neoptolemus, auch des Philoktetes selbst ausgearbeitet sind, der Oedipus Coloneus aber, wegen des Einflusses den derselbe in das Leben des Sophokles selbst hat, und weil er seiner Söhne wegen merkwürdig ist weit besser gefallen hat; wenn nur unsere Zeiten nicht zu eckel wären von einer Wunde im Fusse, oder von einem blinden alten Manne reden zu hören.¹ In dieser Elektra hat er ohne Zweifel zweyerley Aufführung von Kindern bey dem Unglücke ihrer Eltern, so wohl als gegen eine lasterhafte Mutter vorstellen wollen, und er lässt iederzeit der Aufführung der Elektra einigen Vorzug, ungeachtet Chrysothemis durchgängig ein gutes Herz nur mit vieler Furchtsamkeit an den Tag leget. Der Chor billigt meistentheils das Nachgeben der Chrysothemis mehr, als der Elektra ihre Hitze. Unterdessen werde ich allezeit mehr von der Elektra gerührt, weil ihre Hitze von einer grossen Liebe und Edelmüthigkeit verursacht wird. Uebrigens ohngeachtet ich mir nicht eben schmeichle mit meiner Uebersetzung Aufsehen zu machen: so glaube ich, dass mir die Erinnerungen meines Hochgeehrtesten Herrn Vaters satssam im Gedächtnis schweben, wofern mich ja meine Natur zur Eitelkeit führen sollte, mich davon abzuhalten. Wegen der mir überschickten Lieder habe ich mich ganz besonders zu bedanken, ie mehr ich daraus lernen kann, durch wieviel Gottesfurcht, Mässigung und Selbstverläugnung man sich in seinen besten Jahren zu einer beständigen Glückseligkeit zubereiten müsse. Ich bin

Meines Hochgeehrtesten Herrn Vaters
gehorsamster Sohn

JOHANN ELIAS SCHLEGEL.

Leipzig
den 6. April
1740.

(3) *Gottsched to Schlegel* (Mrg. CCCLIVa, T. III)

Hochwohledler und Hochwohlgelehrter
insonders Hochzuehrender Herr,

Nichts hätte mir angenehmer seyn können, als die Versicherung von Eurer Hochwohledlen unveränderten guten Andenken, womit mich

¹ Cf. above p. 400 and note 3.

Dieselben beehret haben. Nun habe ich zwar vieler Verrichtungen halber, womit mich mein itziges Amt bisher beladen hat, die Beantwortung derselben lange genug verschieben müssen; und E. Hochwohlendl. hätten also leicht unwillig darüber werden können, wenn Dero Freundschaft und Liebe gegen mich etwas geringer gewesen wären. Allein umdesto mehr haben Dieselben mich erfreuet, da Sie es auch an einem wiederholten Zeichen von Dero Gewogenheit nicht haben ermangeln lassen; wofür ich denn doppelte Verbindlichkeit schuldig geworden.

Wie ich übrigens an E. H. Wohlergehen und Glücke allemal viel Theil genommen, auch selbst herzlich gern etwas dazu beygetragen hätte, wenn ich nur Gelegenheit und Kräfte genug dazu gehabt hätte; also statte ich voritzo Denenselben zu Dero wirklich angetretenen Bedienung meinen Glückwunsch ab;¹ in der festen Versicherung es werde diese nur die niedrigste Stufe zu Dero baldigen Beförderung seyn...²

Was die Freude der Herrn Dresdener betrifft, die sie über die Frechheit pasquillantischer Federn³ gehabt, und vielleicht noch haben mögen, so gönne ich ihnen dieselbe sehr. Ich glaube aber, dass Sie⁴ mit solchen Lästern die Ehre werden theilen müssen. Ich bin mein Tage soviel gelobet, und getadelt worden, dass ich zu beyden schon ganz unempfindlich bin. Und da man vielleicht in dem ersten oft gegen mich zu freygebig gewesen, so ist es kein Wunder, dass man in dem letztern zu weit geht. Ich muss also eins gegen das andre abrechnen; und die rechte Mittelstrasse der Nachwelt überlassen. Was mich am meisten dabey schmerzet, ist dass meine Lästern zum Theil Leute sind, denen ich Wohlthaten erwiesen, und die selbst ihren geläuterten Witz, und reine Poesie, meiner Anweisung zu danken haben. Doch das gereicht nicht so wohl mir, als ihnen zur Schande: wiewohl ich sie bedaure, dass sie sich so zu Steinen brauchen lassen, womit ein böser Bube nach einem recht-schaffenen Manne wirft. Ich hätte ihnen wenigstens edlere Gemüther zugetrauet; bedaure es aber, dass ich mich so betrogen habe. Es geht mir

¹ This refers to Schlegel's appointment as secretary to von Spener, Saxon ambassador at the Danish court.

² The passage omitted refers to persons in Copenhagen to whom Gottsched offered to give Schlegel introductions.

³ This refers probably to the *Sammlung Critischer, Poetischer und andrer geistvollen Schriften*, Zürich, 1741-4, by Bodmer, Breitinger and others.

⁴ Thus in the MS., but Gottsched can hardly be referring to Schlegel (cf. p. 405, note 5); the reference is probably to the 'Herrn Dresdener', Joh. Ulrich König, C. L. Liscow and J. C. Rost. Liscow had attacked Gottsched's theories in his *Vorrede* to C. H. Heinecke's translation of Longinus (Leipzig, 1742); Rost had attacked Gottsched personally by embodying in an epic poem, *Das Vorspiel* (Leipzig, 1742) the episode of Frau Neuber's presentation of *Der allerkostbarste Schatz* (18 September 1741), in which she ridiculed Gottsched. König, Heinecke and Liscow are said to have conspired with Rost in producing this epic; cf. B. Litzmann; *Christian Ludwig Liscow in seiner litterarischen Laufbahn*, Hamburg and Leipzig, 1883, pp. 129 ff.

indessen eben so wie dem Menage. Dieser schreibt in seinen Menagianen¹ p. 389. Mecontent d'avoir tant d'amis, qui ne faisoient rien pour moi, et de me voir d'ailleurs attaqué par quantité de gens, à qui je n'avois jamais donné lieu d'être de mes ennemis, je me retirerai. Ich schrieb dieses neulich an Hn. Strauben;² aber er hat mir noch nicht geantwortet. Vielleicht tritt er auch ehestens zu meinen Feinden: denn nunmehr muss ich auch dieses besorgen, so unwahrscheinlich es mir sonst ist, denn.³ Omnia jam fiunt fieri,⁴ quae posse negabam.

Schliesslich wird mir die Fortsetzung von E. Hochwohledl. schönen Abhandlung allezeit angenehm seyn. Ich schicke zu dem Ende den 1. Th. davon. An Dero Arminius soll nächstens zum IV. Th. der Schaubühne der Anfang gemacht werden. Der Geschäftige soll auch gleich folgen; und ich hoffe dass beyde Deutschland Ehre machen sollen. Uebrigens lebet E.H. wohl und vergnügt, und wenn mich nur das Vertrauen auf Dero Freundschaft nicht betrügt, so glauben sie,⁵ dass ich gewisse falsche Brüder leicht vergessen werde. An Hn. Secr. Koppen⁶ und wo es noch andre redliche Israeliter giebt, bitte ich mich zu empfehlen. Ich bin, mit aller Aufrichtigkeit

E. Hochwohledlen

Meines hochzuehrenden Herrn Secretärs

Dienstergebenster

GOTTSCHED.

Leipzig den 30 Dec.

1742.

(4) *Gottsched to Schlegel* (Mrg. CCCLIVa, T. v, no. 55)

Hochwohledler

insonders Hochzuehrender Herr,

E. Hochwohledl. bin ich zuförderst für Uebersendung meiner dänischen Weltweisheit,⁷ und Dero fortgesetzten Abhandlung sehr

¹ Gilles Ménage, *Menagiana* (first published in 1693).

² G. B. Straube, author of 'Versuch eines Beweises, dass eine gereimte Comödie nicht gut seyn könne' (*Beyträge zur critischen Historie der deutschen Sprache, Poesie und Beredsamkeit*, St. 23, ix, 466–85) to which Schlegel replied by the 'Schreiben über die Comödie in Versen' (*ibid.*, St. 24, vi, 624–51).

³ Thus the punctuation in the MS.

⁴ Thus in the MS., although the sense demands that the comma should be after 'fiunt'.

⁵ Thus in the MS.; Gottsched is here clearly addressing Schlegel.

⁶ J. F. Koppe (Goedeke has Kopp), translator of Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* and of Voltaire's *Alzire*.

⁷ Cf. Schlegel's letters to Gottsched, 18 April 1743 and 3 August 1743 (Seeliger, *op. cit.*, nos. 3 and 4); Schlegel sent Gottsched his own copy of the Danish translation of the latter's *Erste Gründe der gesammten Weltweisheit, darinnen alle philosophische Wissenschaften, in ihrer natürlichen Verknüpfung, in zween Theilen, abgehandelt werden* (Leipzig, 1734) which had just appeared, and requested him to give the money for it to J. A. Schlegel.

verbunden. Das Geld für die erstere hat der H. Bruder erhalten; und von der letzten ist der grösste Theil in beygehendem Stücke der Beyträge abgedruckt. Alles wäre mir zuviel geworden.¹ Es ist aber schon wiederum ein neues Stück im Drucke, darinn der Schluss erscheinen wird.²

Wenn mir der H. Bruder Dero Dido überliefern wird, soll er auch das gewöhnliche Geschenk³ dafür erhalten. Noch zur Zeit aber hat er zwar den Brief, aber nicht das Trauerspiel abgegeben. Was übrigens die Welt, oder vielmehr die Zeitungsschreiber von dero Herrmann geurtheilet, das kann ich nicht schreiben, würde mich auch daran nicht soviel kehren, als wenn ich denselben einmal aufführen sehen, und die Urtheile der Zuschauer davon vernehmen könnte. Allein ich weis nicht was die Neuberinn anfigt, dass sie es gar nicht mehr spielt; ja auch den Müssiggänger, den sie doch eher gehabt als ich, nicht vorgestellt hat.⁴ Gleichwohl hat sie aus meinem IV. Theile der Schaubühne die ungleiche Heirath nicht nur ein, oder zweymal, sondern wohl schon sechsmal gespielt: wie ich denn selbst der sechsten Vorstellung beygewohnt, und wohl sagen kann, dass sie mit grossem Beyfalle der Zuschauer aufgenommen worden; obgleich der in der ersten Messwoche schon vorhandene Adel grösstentheils mit den Zähnen knirschte. Ich glaube auch gewiss dass diese so vielmalige Vorstellung mir zu gefallen nicht geschehen sey, und wundre mich um destomehr, dass sie nicht vielmehr die Stücke ihrer guten Freunde gewählet hat.

Der Zweifel, den E. H. bey dem am Ende der ungleichen Heyrath abgebrochenen Worte bekommen, kann meines Erachtens niemanden einfallen, als dem, der das vorhergehende nicht in Betrachtung zieht.⁵ Der Verfasser hatte nämlich das letzte Wort ausdrücklich hingeschrieben:

¹ The *Abhandlung von der Nachahmung* appeared as follows: Sections 1–15 *Beyträge zur kritischen Historie*, St. 29, VIII, 1742; Sections 16–21 (to which Gottsched here refers) *Beyträge*, St. 31, VIII, 1743; Sections 22–24, *Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste*, St. 5, I, 1745

² Gottsched lost the end (cf. Seeliger, *op. cit.*, no. 6), and it was not published until 1745.

³ This would seem to run counter to Wolff's suggestion (*op. cit.*, p. 50) that Schlegel achieved something unusual when he received money from Gottsched for his *Herrmann*. Cf. also Seeliger, *op. cit.*, no. 8, dated 20 September 1746, in which Schlegel asks Gottsched to return the MS. of his *Electra* translation, 'gegen Zurückgebung dessen, was ich dafür erhalten habe'.

⁴ Cf. Schlegel's letter to Hagedorn, 4 September 1743 (*Hagedorns Werke*, ed. cit., v, 285, 286). Schlegel states that he had asked Frau Neuber to negotiate with publishers with a view to an edition of his plays. While ostensibly consenting she had in reality planned with a publisher a 'Schaubühne' of her own, in which Schlegel's plays were to appear along with those of Koch and others. When Schlegel discovered this he ceased negotiations, and this doubtless explains why Frau Neuber no longer performed his plays.

⁵ Schlegel found the end suggestive and adds that, had it not been for this, he would have attributed the play to Frau Gottsched (cf. Seeliger, *op. cit.*, no. 4, dated 3 August 1743). The end of the play (*Deutsche Schaubühne*, IV, 1743, 184) reads thus:

Wilibald: 'Je! So hole doch der Henker alle... (Er schlägt sich aufs Maul). Ich hätte bald ein böses Wort gesagt.'

Hole doch der Henker alle Fräuleins. Allein ich habe es aus Behutsamkeit nicht wollen drucken lassen; weil ich diese edlen Schönen nicht offenbar beschimpfen lassen wollte; und glaubte, dass man es aus dem Zusammenhange wohl sehen würde, wovon die Rede wäre. Es ist mir auch hier noch niemand vorgekommen, der im Lesen, oder in der Vorstellung eine Unflätere oder Zote dabey vermuthet hätte. Sollte indessen eine neue Anklage davon gemacht werden, so würde ich wenigstens Fr.... hindrucken lassen, um auch die argwöhnischen Leser auf den rechten Weg zu bringen.

Das Geschlechtregister von dero Trauerspielen werde ich mir empfohlen seyn lassen;¹ wiewohl ich nicht glaube, dass solches zu dero Ehre so nöthig sey. Alle Dero Freunde, denen Dido bekannt geworden, ziehen sie dem Herrmann vor. Und wenn ich selbst nach Muthmassungen gehen soll, so dürfte ich mich bald für sie erklären, ohne sie gelesen zu haben. Die Fabel zeigt mir schon, dass sie voller Affect seyn würde; und dieser macht ein Trauerspiel schön, nicht aber die sehr ausgearbeiteten und sinnreichen Verse.² Vielleicht gewinnen also E.H. durch die Dido noch mehrere Leser und Zuschauer, als durch den Herrmann.

Nachdem die dresdenische Zeitungs Fabrike³ etlichemal von Hofe aus nachdrückliche Erinnerungen bekommen, ist sie gar verstummt: und wie man hört so ist auch das Reich der Hn. Lustigmacher sehr uneins geworden. Heineke⁴ ist aus des Ministers Diensten von Liscow verdrungen, und von dem deutschen Franzosen⁵ in einem Gedicht aufs Königl. Churprinzen Geburtsfest, zum Gelächter gemacht worden. Wie sehr sich ganz Dresden darüber gefreuet habe, ist daraus abzunehmen, dass es dreymal hat aufgelegt werden müssen; und häufig nach Leipzig geschickt werden. Endlich ist auch Rost⁶ bey Liscow in Ungnade gefallen und wer weis was ferner geschieht. So geht es mit Gesellschaften die kein tugendhafter Band, sondern die Schmähsucht verbindet.

¹ Schlegel had asked Gottsched to put a note in vol. v of the *Deutsche Schaubühne* to the effect that his plays were not being published in the order in which they had been written (cf. Seeliger, *op. cit.*, no. 5, dated 18 September 1743).

² Cf. Schlegel's own opinion in the *Vorrede* to his *Theatralische Werke*, Copenhagen, 1747 (*Werke*, ed. cit., III, 213 ff.; *Deutsche Litteraturdenkmale*, 26, pp. 167 ff.); also in letter to Bodmer, 8 October 1746 (Stäudlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 38 ff.).

³ Refers to the *Dresdnische Nachrichten von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*. Auf das Jahr 1743. This appeared from 2 January until 21 December (cf. Litzmann, *op. cit.*, p. 137). Gottsched would appear to be premature in thinking it had already ceased to appear.

⁴ C. H. Heinecke. I have been unable to find any confirmation of Gottsched's statement that Liscow procured his dismissal from the service of Graf Brühl. Heinecke had obtained Liscow's appointment as secretary to Brühl in 1741 (cf. *Christian Ludwig Liscows Leben*, von G. C. F. Lisch, Schwerin, 1845, pp. 45, 46).

⁵ Johann Christian Trömer (1696-1756) wrote under the name of Jean Chrétien Toucement or der Deutsch-François.

⁶ Gottsched's information here also seems to be incorrect (cf. B. Litzmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-2).

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In Halle ist eine neue Monatsschrift¹ entstanden, die es mit allen schweizerischen, dresdenischen und hamburgischen Feinden des guten Geschmacks aufnimmt, und es der greifswaldischen Gesellschaft auch zuvorthun wird, wenn sie so hochfährt.² E.H. müssen sie selbst lesen, um mir Beyfall zu geben. Wie Denenselben das Schreiben Effingers des Jüngeren³ in meinen Beyträgen gefallen wird, bin ich begierig zu vernehmen. In das nächste Stück kömmt eine Nachahmung des lucianischen *ῥητορων διδασκαλος*, das ist, ein *κριτικων διδασκαλος*,⁴ der vermuthlich die Geheimnisse unsrer heutigen Zeitungsschreiber und Schweizer entdecken wird.

Nach dienstlichem Empfehl an alle, die mich kennen und sich meiner erinnern, verharre ich

E. Hochwohledler

dienstwilliger

GOTTSCHED.

Leipz. den 16 Oct.
1743.

Man hofft diese Messe den Poetus Voltaire hier zu sehen.

(5) *Rabener to Schlegel* (Mrg. CCLXXXI, Special volume, no. 17)

Mein lieber Herr Schlegel,

...Ich würde Bedenken haben, Sie, mein Herr, mit dieser Sache zu beschweren, wenn ich es nicht aus einer kleinen Eigenliebe thät, weil ich mir billig darauf etwas einzubilden habe, dass die Leuthe in dem Gedanken stehen, Dieselben würden aus Wohlgewogenheit gegen mich eine Sache zu befördern suchen, welche vielleicht sehr verdrüsslich, iedoch für die ehrlichen Kaufleute wichtig genug ist. Gönnen Sie mir immer die[se] Eitelkeit, mein lieber Herr Schlegel, und wenn es seyn kann, so lassen Sie diese Sache zu Dero gütigen Vorsorge Sich bestens Empfohlen seyn. Ich würde Sie dafür meiner aufrichtigsten Ergebenheit versichern, wenn ich mir nicht schmeichelte, dass Sie deren schon vorlängst überzeugt wären.

¹ *Bemühungen zur Beförderung der Kritik und des guten Geschmacks*, ed. C. Mylius and J. A. Cramer, Halle, 1743-7.

² *Kritische Versuche zur Aufnahme der deutschen Sprache*, Greifswald, 1742 ff.

³ 'Schreiben an die Herausgeber dieser Beyträge... von Effinger dem Jüngern.' Chur, 17 August 1743 (*Beyträge zur critischen Historie*, St. 31, 1743). This article, probably by Gottsched, was directed against the Swiss.

⁴ Cf. *Beyträge zur critischen Historie*, St. 32. 1743. Braitmaier (*Geschichte der poetischen Theorie und Kritik*, Frauenfeld, 1888, I, 238) calls this article 'das gemeinste Produkt' in the whole quarrel between Gottsched and the Swiss.

Gönnen Sie mir Dero Freundschaft und Wohlwollen ferner und glauben Sie, dass ich Zeit Lebens mit der grössten Hochachtung seyn werde,

Mein Herr,

Dero

gehorsamster Diener

GOTTLIEB WILHELM RABENER.

Leipzig

am 7. Aug.

1744.

P.S. Weil ich einmahl angefangen habe, Ihnen das Anliegen unsers Vat[er]landes¹ zu empfehlen; so will mir auch die Freyheit nehmen Sie da[rum] zu ersuchen, was der Herr Bruder von unsrer gelehrten Meuterey wider den allerliebsten Pflegevater geschrieben hat. Muntern Sie uns durch Ihren Beytritt auf, wenn Ihnen dieser Vorschlag nicht gar zu wider ist, und hätte er auch Ihren Beyfall nicht gänzlich, so sehen Sie es nur als ein poëtisches Allmosen an was Sie uns übersenden.² Ich kann nicht läugnen, dass ich die Belustigungen³ noch eben so hochhalte, als vorher, ich hätte aber doch aus vielen Ursachen ihr Ende gerne gesehen. Vielleicht erlangen wir auf diese Art unsre Absicht, und die Belustigungen sterben an der Abzehrung, wenn sich zu gleicher Zeit eine neue Monathschrift anfängt. Ich will es selbst wagen auf den Winter mit daran zu arbeiten, um desswillen gehe ich ietzo von Hausse zu Hausse und sammle mir witzige Einfälle. Es ist nur Schade, dass keine Streitschriften hinein kommen sollen; denn weil ich ietzo die meiste Zeit auf den Dörfern unter den Bauern zu thun habe;⁴ so habe ich das Vergnügen gehabt, rechte Originale von Kunstrichtern kennen zu lernen. Jedoch ich muss aufhören ehe mein Postscript länger wird, als der Brief. Ich bin

Dero

gehorsamster Diener

G. W. RABENER.

¹ In the opening paragraph of the letter Rabener asks Schlegel to expedite some business in Copenhagen on behalf of a Leipzig firm.

² Schlegel's contributions to the *Neue Beyträge zum Vergnügen des Verstandes und Witzes* (ed. C. C. Gärtner, Bremen und Leipzig, 1746–51) were few.

³ *Die Belustigungen des Verstandes und des Witzes* (ed. J. J. Schwabe, Leipzig, 1741–5).

⁴ Rabener was Steuerrevisor in Leipzig 1741–53.

(6) *Kästner to Schlegel* (Mrg. CCCLIVa, T. III)

Monsieur.

¹...Je vous aurois pu donner cette reponse plutôt, mais je l'ai retardée pour apprendre le jugement désiré, que Voici: H. Schlegels Tragödien sind sehr schön. Ich werde mir sie kaufen, ich habe sie nur geliehen gehabt. Ich will sie nächstens im B... S...² recensiren. Ce n'est pas ma faute si ce jugement Vous est plus favorable que Vous ne le souhaitez peut-être si Vous contés Mr G... parmi ces juges dont les louanges deshonnorent plus que leurs critiques. Vous vous pourrés cependant glorifier d'avoir fait quelque chose die Sachsen und die Schweiz mit einem Munde loben. Votre mysterieux³ m'a fort diverti, et le Canut, ou comme j'ai rebâti cette Piece: *l'Ulfo* fort emu. Vous me permettrés pourtant de dire que Votre Ulfo me semble d'un caractere un peu trop bas pour un heros de tragedie. Il se rend haissable par tout, et il n'a pas de belle qualité qu'une soif brutale de la gloire. C'est ce qui fait que nous n'avons de compassion que pour sa pauvre epouse, dont nous ne concevons pas comment elle puisse aimer ce monstre. Or je crois, que pour rendre la morale de Votre tragedie qui la finit, plus sensible il auroit été bon de représenter un heros malheureux et même blâmable par ce defect lâ, qui cependant se seroit attiré notre estime par quelque autre endroit. Ce qui m'a le plus choqué ce sont les faussetés que Vous faites dire â Ulfo particulièrement en ce qui regarde la maniere de la quelle il a obtenu son epouse. Autant que je connois les Anciens allemands et je crois que Vous ne devriés pas représenter les Danois plus mechans, je les [croir]ois incapables de mensonges si bas, au moins leurs heros qui se piquent de la gloire, et si Vous aviés oté ces bassesses du caractère d'Ulfo, en laissant tout le reste on auroit â ce que j'en puis juger pris plus de part â son malheur, et senti par consequent avec plus de force la morale.

Pour ce qui regarde la chose que Vous avés demandé dans votre dernière lettre, en voici autant que je puis vous servir, moi qui se ne pique pas d'être *elegantiae arbiter*. Il me paroît qu'il ne manque â ce M. lâ qu'un peu plus de conversation. Il n'a rien dans ses manieres qui soit impoli, mais il ne les a pas encore si aisées et libres comme il faut les

¹ The beginning of this letter is purely personal. The accents are even more arbitrary than is usual at this period and are also sometimes difficult to decipher. I have endeavoured to reproduce them faithfully.

² Presumably this stands for Büchersaal (*Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste*, Leipzig, 1745-9).

³ *Der Geheimnissvolle*, first published in *Theatralische Werke* (cf. *Werke*, ed. cit., II, 183 ff.).

avoir pour se produire dans le grand monde. Il paroît dans sa conduite toujours un peu gêné et craintif. Cependant à ce qu'il me semble il s'est déjà beaucoup changé depuis le tems que je commençois à le connoître et ces petits défauts, (s'il faut les appeler de ce nom) s'évanouiront aisément, s'il a un peu plus de commerce avec les gens d'une belle conduite. Je crois même qu'ils ne lui nuiront pas tout à fait pour faire sa fortune; car pour peu qu'on se connaisse en Hommes, on voit qu'il ne lui manque que ce que l'esprit le plus vif ne se peut pas donner à lui même sans avoir eu l'usage du monde, et je gage que Vous Monsieur, tout Poète que Vous fûtes, n'auriez pas été plus éveillé que lui pendant que Vous étiez chés vous (car c'est une autre affaire après que l'on est devenu homme de la cour) si Vous n'aviez pas été Poète anacreontique. Vous verrez que je n'attribuë ceci à Vos odes anacreontiques, mais à l'occasion que Vous avez eue d'en faire. *Corollarium* Pour éveiller ce Mr. lâ il lui faut donner l'occasion de faire des odes anacreontiques.

Pardonnés les fautes de cette lettre à moi qui suis encore las aiant employé tout cet avant midi à voir faire nos Soldats leurs exercices: Jugés combien il faut que ces exercices fatiguent, si c'est une fatigue de les regarder seulement. A cette occasion, réfléchissant sur l'obligation ou nos Soldats sont de n'agir que martialement, je me suis formé une belle définition d'un Soldat que voici: C'est une machine qui peut être malheureux....

Monsieur

le Vôte

KAESTNER.

Leipzig.

(7) *Bodmer to Schlegel* (Mrg. CCCLIVa, T. III)

Hochedelgebohrner

Hochgeschätzter Herr Gesandtschaftssecretar.

Ich hoffe, Sie haben mirs nicht übel genommen dass ich Ihnen den Hn. Schuldheiss zu meinem Sekundant in dem Briefwechsel mit Ihnen vorgeschlagen habe,¹ nachdem eine Menge Arbeiten mir nicht erlaubt in diesem Stücke so fleissig zu seyn, als ich wol wünschete. Also habe die Ehre nun mit diesen wenigen Zeilen auf Ihr geschätztestes vom 18.

¹ Schlegel had sent the first two books of his epic poem *Heinrich der Löwe* (*Werke*, ed. cit., iv, 7 ff.) for criticism to Bodmer, who passed them on to Schuldheiss, with whom Schlegel then exchanged letters (cf. Vorbericht to *Heinrich der Löwe* by J. H. Schlegel, *Werke*, ed. cit., v, 3).

Sept.¹ zu antworten. Auf die meisten Artikel desselben² kann ich mit desto besserem Recht stillschweigen, weil ich darüber keine anderen Gedanken hege, als dieselben zu verstehen geben. Die Comödien des Hn. von Holberg sind in der That voller Plattheiten, und voller Lücken.³ Man muss sich nicht auf den Geschmack eines Gelehrten verlassen, welcher den Lucan oder Statius über den Virgil erhebet. Die moralischen Abhandlungen⁴ sind sein bestes Werk, und haben öfters auch in denen Stellen Gründlichkeit, wo man nur Lusus Ingenii zu sehen vermeint. Ihr Geheimnisvoller ist nicht so übel gerathen, dass sie⁵ den strengen Ehmann nicht sollten wagen dürfen.⁶ Ich war in den Gedanken, dass Ihr Abdolonymus⁷ zur Hauptabsicht hätte, den ungereimten Ausdruck in den Trauerspielen zum Gelächter zu machen. Sie haben sich in Ihrer Vorrede zu ihren theatralischen Werken⁸ sehr geschickt und sehr gründlich über diesen Punkt erklärt. Ich bin Ihnen für das Geschenk⁹ und das Vergnügen, welche Sie mir mit demselben gemacht haben, höchlich verbunden. Gewisse Leute haben ihre Unzufriedenheit mit der ausserordentlichen Bildung des Ulfo nicht verbergen können. Ich glaube doch dass dieser Charakter weniger idealisch ist, als man meinen mögte. Ich halte auch davon, dass er in der Tragödie mit Nutzen angebracht werden kan, wofern er so mit der gehörigen Verabscheuung vorgestellt, und der Vorzug, den Canut und Godwin über ihn haben, in starken Zügen gezeichnet wird.

Wenn in dem Sittenmahler¹⁰ enthalten ist (welches ich nicht sehe) dass [eine] jede Provinz in Deutschland sich aus ihrer Mundart eine eigene Sprache machen solle, so ist das nicht meine Meinung, ich bin auch nicht

¹ See J. Crüger, art. cit., no. II.

² Bodmer refers mainly to remarks on Aristotle's theory of tragedy and Gottsched's interpretation of it. He had replied fully to Schlegel's letter on 2 September 1747 (*Morgenblatt*, 1810, nr. 185) but Schlegel had not received his reply when he wrote on 18 September.

³ Cf. letter from Bodmer to Hagedorn, 14 February 1745 (*Hagedorns Werke*, ed. cit., v, 182, 183), where Bodmer says: 'Holberg ist es zufrieden wenn er in seinen Komödien nur etwa einen gemeinen Charakter in ein paar Gemüthsumständen folgen kann und er macht nicht selten starke Lücken; oder wenn Sie lieber wollen, Sprünge.'

⁴ *L. Holbergs Moralske Tanker*, Copenhagen, 1744. Two German translations of this work were published in Leipzig in 1744.

⁵ Thus in the MS.

⁶ Cf. Schlegel's letter to Bodmer, 18 September 1747 (J. Crüger, art. cit.) in which he refers to his plan for a comedy in prose entitled *Der strenge Ehemann* and inspired by Steele's *Tender Husband*. The play ultimately appeared as *Der Triumph der guten Frauen* (*Werke*, ed. cit., II, 323 ff.)

⁷ The hero of the tragi-comedy *Der Gärtnerkönig* (*Werke*, ed. cit., II, 635 ff.) which Schlegel planned. Schlegel first mentions the *Gärtnerkönig* in a letter to Bodmer, 8 October 1746 (Stäudlin, *op. cit.*, 39); with his next letter, 15 April 1747 (Stäudlin, *op. cit.*, 52, 53) he sends Bodmer a specimen of a few lines; in his letter of 18 September 1747, Schlegel explains that he does not intend the play to be a literary satire only, but to have general interest as well.

⁸ For this Vorrede see *Werke*, ed. cit., III, 213 ff.

⁹ The present was a copy of Schlegel's *Theatralische Werke*.

¹⁰ *Der Mahler der Sitten*, Zürich, 1746.

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SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS FROM THE
CORRESPONDENCE OF JOHANN
ELIAS SCHLEGEL

BY
ELIZABETH M. WILKINSON

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Erlebach. Ich vergönne zwar den [Einwohnern] einer Provinz solche Wörter, die ihr eigenthümlich sind, aber nur wenn solche ihre 16 Ahnen aufweisen können, wenn sie geschickt, [...] notwendig sind. Kurz, ich habe dessfalls kein andre Gedanken, [als] Ew. Hochedelg. Vielleicht hat Erlebach zu viel gefodert, damit man ihm wenigstens das was recht ist, angedeihen liesse.

Es ist mir lieb dass die belebte Bildsäule¹ Ihnen nicht missgefällt. Wiewol [ich] nicht glaube, dass ihre ersten Reden zu metaphysisch seyen,² so habe ich doch aus eigenen Ursachen ihre Empfindungen und Gedanken, die sie S. 13.14 offenbaret, sehr stark verändert und erweitert. Ich lasse sie sich über den Ton ihrer eigenen Stimme verwundern. Denn sie dacht erstlich nur leise. Sie sieht die Luft um sich her vor einen tiefen Abgrund an; wo sie keinen festen Fuss fas[sen] könnte. Ihre ersten Gedanken entstehen bloss von ihrem Gefühle, und sie hatte die Augen noch beschossen. Als sie itzt die Augen eröffnet, kommen ihr die Dinge, die sie nur durch das Gefühl kannte, ganz verändert vor. Sie hält sich selbst vor verwandelt. Dann versichert sie sich durch ihre Hand, dass sie die vorige wäre. Doch ist ihr stets ein Geheimniss, dass sie die Figur von jeglichem Gliedmasse ihres Körpers gedoppelt sieht. Als sie die anderen Bildsäulen wahrnimmt hält sie dieselben auch vor Figuren ihrer eignen Gestalt; sie weiss aber nicht, was sie aus dem Kopf derselben machen soll; weil sie an den Bildern ihres eigenen Leibes den Kopf nicht sieht. Auch weiss sie nicht, was sie daraus machen soll, dass diese andren Statuen die Füsse nicht wie sie selbst thut, unterwärts sondern aufwärts gekehrt halten. . . . Sie ruft einer von den Statuen, die ihr am nächsten steht, mit lauter Stimme zu. Sie versucht sich von der Stelle, wo sie sass, los zu machen. Wiewol der Boden sie stark an sich zieht dass sie nicht in die Luft hinausfällt, so fühlet sie innerlich ein stärkeres Gewinde welches sie über denselben empor trägt. Ehe sie den Fuss über das Gestelle hinunter auf den Boden setzt, erforscht sie dessen Festigkeit mit sachtem Drucke, dann geht sie mit sanften Tritten fort. . . .

Ich gedenke diese Veränderungen, die ich hier nur entworfen habe, in meine Sammlung Critischer neuen Briefe anzubringen, wenn ich ein Hundert werde gesammelt habe [sic]. Denn diese sollen nicht so weitläufig werden, wie die [wirklich] gedruckten sind.

Dünket Ew. Hochedelg. denn Pigmaliions Verwunderung über den ersten Anblick der belebten Statue nicht genug ausgedrückt, wenn es

¹ Cf. *Neue Erzählungen verschiedener Verfasser*, Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1747, which contains *Pygmalion und Elise* by Bodmer.

² Cf. Schlegel's letter, 18 September 1747 (J. Crüger, art. cit.).

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heisst: Sie konnte dieses alles *ununterbrochen* reden—er ward vor Verwunderung bis in seine innersten Adern so stark erschüttert, dass er entzückt da stuhnd....Er dankte mit leisen Worten der himmlischen Macht....Ist das kaltsinnig?¹ Sonst ist auch wahr, und dieses hätte können gesagt werden, er hat sich mit den Gedanken von ihrer Belebung und der Möglichkeit dessen so lange bekannt gemacht, dass man nicht sagen kann, sie sei ihm gänzlich unvermuthet gewesen, oder er sey dazu gar nicht vorbereitet gewesen.

Wieder auf die Materie von der Sprache zu kommen, so muss ich Ihnen doch erzählen, dass eine Zeit gewesen, in welcher die schweizerische Sprache, die damahls wie beynahe noch heutzutage mit der schwäbischen eine Mundart ausgemacht, die herrschende und die Hofsprache war. Das war in der Zeit der Kaiser aus dem schwäbischen Stamme, wie davon die Minnegesänge, von denen wir diesen Winter zwanzig oder dreissig Bogen liefern wollen,² genugsam zeugen. Es sind unter diesen schwäbischen Poeten auch Düringer, Sachsen, und Brandenburger, die alle in der schwäbischen Sprache schreiben, mit einem sehr kleinen Unterschiede, den die provinzial-Aussprache verursachte. Wir wollen nicht die Gelehrten allein sondern auch die ungelehrten³ und die Frauenzimmer selbst in den Stand stellen, diese alten Minnelieder ganz zu verstehen; und man soll ungeachtet der zwar alten aber nicht ungeschickten Sprache den artigen Geist der Poeten, der ganz Natur war, bewundern.

Ich habe die Ehre mit stets zunehmender Hochachtung zu verbleiben

Ew. Hochedelgeb.

gehorsamst ergebenst.

JOH. JACOB BODMER.

Zürch den 7. xii

1747.

My grateful acknowledgements are due to the librarian of the University library of Tartu for permission to publish these letters; and to the University of London Research Fund for a grant enabling me to visit Tartu in order to examine the MSS.

ELIZABETH M. WILKINSON.

LONDON.

¹ Cf. Schlegel's letter, 18 September 1747 (J. Crüger, art. cit.).

² This was *Proben der alten Schwäbischen Poesie des dreyzehnten Jahrhunderts. Aus der Manessischen Sammlung*, published jointly by Bodmer and Breitinger at Zürich in 1748.

³ Cf. Schlegel's letter to Bodmer, 18 September 1747 (art. cit.).

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SOME UNPUBLISHED LETTERS FROM THE CORRESPONDENCE OF JOHANN ELIAS SCHLEGEL

THE Morgenstern collection in the University library of Tartu (formerly Dorpat) contains among many interesting letters of the eighteenth century some correspondence between Johann Elias Schlegel and his contemporaries. Writers of the various studies on Schlegel which appeared towards the end of last century deplored the fact that, although the letters from Schlegel to Gottsched, Bodmer and Hagedorn had been preserved and for the most part published,¹ not a single reply from any of these three had yet come to light.² Yet two letters to Schlegel, one from Bodmer and one from Hagedorn, had appeared in print as early as 1810, in the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*.³ These letters were published by Carl Morgenstern, first librarian of the University of Dorpat, under the title: 'Briefe deutscher Dichter und Gelehrten aus den Jahren 1740 bis 1771.' In a prefatory note, Morgenstern explains that in Riga he had found, and obtained possession of, many letters from poets and men of letters, and expresses his intention of publishing a selection of the more interesting, notably from Bodmer, Gellert, Gerstenberg, Gleim, Hagedorn,

¹ Cf. K. Seeliger, *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Meissen*, Bd. II, Heft 2, Meissen, 1888 (containing eight letters from Schlegel to Gottsched from originals in the Universitätsbibliothek, Leipzig); also Th. W. Danzel, *Gottsched und seine Zeit*, Leipzig, 1848; G. F. Stäudlin, *Briefe berühmter und edler Deutschen an Bodmer*, Stuttgart, 1794 (three letters from Schlegel to Bodmer from originals sent to Stäudlin by Bodmer); J. Crüger in *Archiv für Literaturgeschichte*, Bd. XIV, Leipzig, 1886 (four letters from Schlegel to Bodmer from originals in Zürich); *Hagedorns Werke*, ed. Eschenburg, Hamburg, 1800, v (six letters from Schlegel to Hagedorn from originals in the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg). According to Eugen Wolff (*Johann Elias Schlegel*, Berlin, 1889) other letters from Schlegel to Hagedorn were in the possession of Professor B. Litzmann. Despite repeated enquiries, I have not been able to ascertain the present whereabouts of these.

² Cf. J. Rentsch (*Johann Elias Schlegel als Trauerspieldichter mit besonderer Berücksichtigung seines Verhältnisses zu Gottsched*, Leipzig, 1890, p. 7), who expresses particular regret at the consequent loss of evidence which might have been of use to him in his examination of the relations between Gottsched and Schlegel, and deplores too the disappearance of Schlegel's correspondence with Kästner; also K. Seeliger (*op. cit.*, p. 156): 'Von Gottscheds Briefen an Schlegel ist nur ein kümmerlicher Rest im Leben des Dichters (von seinem Bruder) bis jetzt veröffentlicht,' and, with reference to the Kästner correspondence: 'Meines Wissens ist nichts davon bekannt.' (For this correspondence with Kästner cf. Schlegel's letter to Hagedorn, 2 April 1749, *Hagedorns Werke*, ed. cit., v, 299.) J. Crüger (*op. cit.*, p. 62) expresses the hope that Bodmer's letters to Schlegel (which he believed to be in Copenhagen) will be published. Neither Wolff, *op. cit.*, nor Antoniewicz (*J. E. Schlegels ästhetische und dramaturgische Schriften*, herausgegeben von J. von Antoniewicz, Heilbronn, 1887. *Deutsche Literaturdenkmale*, 26), who both had access to much unpublished correspondence, reveals any knowledge of actual letters to Schlegel from his contemporaries.

³ Vol. for 1810, nos. 185 and 193. Cf. Goedeke, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*, 3^{te} Auflage, IV, i (Dresden, 1916), 9, 25.

Kästner, Karschin, Klopstock, Rabener, J. E. Schlegel, Weisse and Zachariä. Actually there only appeared in the *Morgenblatt* under this title six letters: from Bodmer, Gellert, Gerstenberg, Gleim (2) and Hagedorn.

At his death in 1852, Morgenstern left his books and manuscripts to the University library in Dorpat. The numerous letters, although bound, are not yet completely catalogued, but examination of the volumes¹ brought to light fifteen letters from and to Elias Schlegel.² With the exception of the two which appeared in the *Morgenblatt*, none of these has to my knowledge been published. They do to some extent contribute to our knowledge of Schlegel's relations with his contemporaries; and from them I have selected the following for publication, since they have at the same time a literary interest.

The evidence for the relations which existed between Gottsched and Schlegel has been ably sifted by J. Rentsch.³ These letters confirm in the main his conclusions. The letter to his father written in Latin (no. 1 below) removes any doubt that Schlegel was, at least for a time, a pupil of Gottsched, however much J. Adolf Schlegel may later have wished to believe the contrary.⁴ It is unlikely that in a private letter he would otherwise have referred to the advantages of working 'sub auspiciis magni viri'. This by no means excludes the possibility of an early independence of outlook; on the contrary such a compromise is characteristic of Schlegel in all his dealings. Indeed in this same letter his rejection of Gottsched's suggestion that he should make a translation of Sophocles' *Electra* in unrhymed verse would seem to support the view that he had, even as early as this, opinions of his own.

Schlegel's independence increased rapidly. Gottsched was perhaps unaware of this, for the tone of his letter of December 1742 (no. 3 below) is warm. Attacked now on both flanks, from Dresden as well as from Zürich, he is eager to retain the support of his most promising pupil.

¹ Through the kindness of the librarian I was able to examine the whole of the Morgenstern collection of letters, as well as that of Friedrich Ludwig Schardius, conservator of coins in the Hermitage Art Gallery in St Petersburg, who presented his collection of letters in manuscript to the University of Dorpat in 1852. This latter collection contains one short letter from Hagedorn to Schlegel.

² The Morgenstern collection further contains four drafts of letters from Schlegel (to Gottsched, Bodmer (2) and Hagedorn) which in some respects differ from the versions finally sent.

³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 4-32, particularly pp. 28, 29; Rentsch concludes that although Schlegel owed much to Gottsched, he maintained from the beginning a certain independence, and that Gottsched's later treatment of Schlegel's work was due to the envy he felt at the increasing praise which his former pupil received on all sides.

⁴ Cf. *Herrn Abt Batteux Einschränkung der schönen Künste auf einen einzigen Grundsatz*, übersetzt, und mit verschiedenen eignen damit verwandten Abhandlungen begleitet, von J. Adolf Schlegel, Leipzig, 1770, II, 516 ff. Also Danzel *op. cit.*, pp. 154-8.

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Very different, however, is his next letter, written only ten months later (no. 4 below). It has an acid quality which the evenness of Schlegel's reply¹ does not lead one to expect. There is a sharpness here, the boasting of wounded vanity, and in the boasting more than a trace of malice. Between the two letters there appeared part IV of the *Deutsche Schaubühne*.² Gottsched sent a copy of this to Schlegel with an accompanying letter.³ On reading the *Vorrede* to this volume of the *Schaubühne*, Schlegel was irritated by Gottsched's chauvinistic interpretation of his *Herrmann*,⁴ and in his reply,⁵ while giving praise to the other plays in the volume, he yet maintained a somewhat critical attitude towards them. And he made an unfortunate suggestion about the end of Frau Gottsched's play, *Die Ungleiche Heyrath*. It is unlikely that this alone would have called forth such a malicious reply; it would seem more probable that Gottsched's envy had been steadily increasing as he was made to feel that the pupil was outstripping the master, and that, provoked by Schlegel's remark, he could no longer hide it.⁶

Interesting light is thrown by this letter on Gottsched's methods of criticism. Rentsch⁷ deduced from Schlegel's letters that Gottsched compared *Herrmann* unfavourably with *Dido* before the latter appeared in print. The facts are more interesting. This letter reveals that he made the comparison before he had even read *Dido*! Nor did he see fit to revise his opinion in any way when he had read the play. It appeared in vol. v of the *Deutsche Schaubühne* and in the *Vorrede* Gottsched said publicly what in this letter he says privately. Thus the lines of his criticism were laid down before he knew anything of the play apart from its theme.

Despite the fact that Gottsched's remarks with reference to the *Ungleiche Heyrath* forced Schlegel in his reply to defend himself against a charge of having been 'unanständig', the correspondence did not imme-

¹ Cf. Seeliger, *op. cit.*, no. 6, dated 2 April 1744. Schlegel usually refers in detail to the letter of his correspondent, so that the contents can sometimes be reconstructed, though not of course the tone.

² This volume contains, in addition to Schlegel's *Herrmann* and *Der geschäftige Müßiggänger*, plays by Frau Gottsched and Th. J. Quistorp. In the *Vorrede* Gottsched compares *Herrmann* unfavourably with Quistorp's plays and imputes to the former an anti-French tendency.

³ Cf. Schlegel's life by his brother: *Johann Elias Schlegels Werke*, Copenhagen and Leipzig, 1761-70, v, p. xxxii. We do not possess the letter which was dated 20 May 1743.

⁴ Cf. Schlegel's *Werke*, ed. cit., v, p. xxiv ('Vertraulicher Brief', dated 11 June 1743).

⁵ Cf. Seeliger, *op. cit.*, no. 4, dated 3 August 1743.

⁶ The whole letter seems designed to provoke Schlegel to anger. Schlegel had expressly delayed sending the second part of the *Abhandlung von der Nachahmung* until it was complete (cf. Seeliger, *op. cit.*, no. 3, 18 April 1743); Gottsched divided it, publishing only half, and promptly lost the rest (cf. Seeliger, *op. cit.*, no. 6, 2 April 1744); moreover he disparages *Herrmann* which Schlegel regarded with particular affection; he gives an offensive twist to Schlegel's remarks on the *Ungleiche Heyrath*; and by his reference to Effinger, he is surely trying to draw Schlegel on the subject of the Swiss.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

diately cease.¹ Indeed Schlegel never openly fell away from Gottsched. Rabener in his letter of August, 1744 (no. 5 below) by no means takes it for granted that Schlegel will want to give wholehearted support to that revolt against 'den allerliebsten Pflegevater' which found expression in the *Bremer Beyträge*.² By 1747, however, Kästner (see letter no. 6 below) assumes that Schlegel will not welcome praise for his work from Gottsched. The severance was complete even though there had been no open break.

This letter from Kästner is further interesting because of the references to *Canut*. More than any other contemporary judgement, these few lines seize upon the weakness of the play and by their suggestions for its improvement indicate that Kästner was aware of the essential requirements of tragedy. Nicolai, in his *Abhandlung vom Trauerspiele*,³ is confused as to whether Canut or Ulfo is the tragic hero;⁴ hence his suggestion that, to concentrate our attention and interest, which are 'getheilet und unbestimmt', on one person, Canut should make some false step and thereby become an effective tragic hero. Kästner betrays no such confusion; he is sure that Ulfo was intended for the tragic hero. He is however no less sure that there is something wrong with Ulfo in that role. In this he is at one with all his contemporaries. But whereas they objected to the character on moral grounds or because of conventional theories of the 'hero', Kästner appears to be moved by more purely dramatic considerations. He accepts the grandiose portrayal of evil, the exaggerated thirst for glory, but rightly feels that, as compensation, Ulfo must possess positive qualities of some kind to win our sympathy for him and to raise his character to a tragic level. He particularly notes that the trick by which he wins his wife lessens our sympathy for him considerably. And indeed, if Schlegel had adhered less closely to historical tradition and rejected or modified this incident, not only would the character of Ulfo have benefited, but the dramatic conflict could have been intensified.

Bodmer was an exception in approving the figure of Ulfo (see letter no. 7 below); but the terms of his commendation reveal his lack of

¹ Danzel assumes its cessation (*op. cit.*, p. 154). Seeliger however (*op. cit.*, no. 7) publishes a further letter from Schlegel (dated 4 May 1745) which refers to a letter from Gottsched dated 20 October 1744. In this he had requested Schlegel to send him *Orestes und Pylades*, probably for publication in part VI of the *Schaubühne*.

² Rabener was nevertheless anxious to have contributions from Schlegel, who was highly thought of by the Bremen circle. Cf. letter from Gärtner to Hagedorn (17 June 1744, *Hagedorns Werke*, ed. cit., v, 215) in which Gärtner puts Schlegel at the head of the list of contributors.

³ *Bibliothek der schönen Wissenschaften und der freyen Künste*, 1 (Leipzig, 1757), pp. 39, 40 and 51-7.

⁴ His confusion does not arise solely on account of the title, as Wolff (*op. cit.*, pp. 135, 136) would suggest, but also from his feeling that our compassion is not sufficiently aroused by the fate of Ulfo and from his failure to analyse the reasons for this.

dramatic sense. He does not see Ulfo as the tragic hero; he conceives him as a kind of evil offset to the goodness of Canut and Godewin, and fails to realize that the destruction of evil is not in itself tragic.

Letters 1 and 2 below, from Schlegel to his father, are the only fragments we possess of a correspondence which must have contained much of literary interest and importance; for the elder Schlegel followed with interest the education of his son and in great measure directed it. These two letters would seem to provide further evidence that Schlegel's approach to Greek drama was in some measure a direct approach.¹ From them it is abundantly clear that Schlegel brought to his study of Greek tragedy a lively interest, warm admiration and a capacity for direct emotional response. He may regret that the play has not a 'schönere Moral', but this does not prevent him from being moved by the figure of Electra herself—as Sophocles intended him to be. Unlike Gottsched's, his appreciation is not chiefly determined by moral or theoretical considerations. When he attempts to say why he is moved, the reasons he gives may seem over-simplified and lacking in psychological insight. Despite the fact that in matters of taste and in his aesthetic views Schlegel was often in advance of his contemporaries, he was nevertheless very much a child of his age; and his understanding of psychological processes was naturally determined by a rationalistic outlook on life. But his feeling is at least spontaneous.

The exaggerated *délicatesse* of the age was a subject on which Schlegel felt strongly.² In a letter written to his brother J. Adolf Schlegel some months previously³ he had made much the same remark on the wound of Philoctetes as he here makes to his father (see letter no. 2 below). He is in effect demanding a wider choice of subjects for drama, not confined to the narrow limits of merely 'schöne Natur'. When one remembers that in the next year Schlegel advised the artist, particularly the dramatic artist

¹ This has recently been disputed. In his study *Elias Schlegel und Wieland als Bearbeiter antiker Tragödien* (Leipzig, 1928), H. Buenemann argues that Schlegel did not, as had previously been thought, go direct to the Greeks for the sources of his early plays, but rather to French plays on the same themes. This does not necessarily imply however, as Buenemann assumes, that Schlegel therefore preferred French tragedy and thought it superior to that of the Greeks; nor that he was without any understanding for Greek tragedy.

² Buenemann (*op. cit.*, pp. 23, 24) suggests that Schlegel was indebted for this view to Brumoy's *Théâtre des Grecs*. It is certain that he knew this work, for he refers to it in the notes to his translation of *Electra* (*Werke*, ed. cit., I, 473). It was however open to him, as it was to Gottsched, to be influenced by any of the French critics; some natural preference must have determined his choice of the champion of the ancients rather than of their opponents.

³ See 'Auszug eines Briefs, welcher einige kritische Anmerkungen über die Trauerspiele der Alten und Neuern enthält' (*Werke*, ed. cit., III, 203 ff.; *Deutsche Literaturdenkmale*, 26, pp. 4 ff.).

and the actor, to avoid 'Vorstellungen voll Ekel und Abscheu',¹ this may sound paradoxical. But in reality it is not. Such 'Vorstellungen' are to be avoided by a toning down of the effect, by a deviation from naturalistic presentation;² in other words by the kind of treatment accorded to a subject, not by limiting the choice of subject. Here we have the core of the difference between Schlegel and Gottsched. For Gottsched the subject is the determining factor; hence he can pronounce judgement on *Dido* without having read it. The criterion for him is the 'Fabel': for Schlegel, what the dramatist makes of the 'Fabel'. The following letters are all in volumes of the Morgenstern collection entitled *Epistolae Autographae Philosophorum celeberrimorum* (five bound volumes and a small separate volume not bound). Neither the letters nor the pages of vol. III are numbered.

(1) *Schlegel to his father* (Mrg. CCCLIVa, T. v, nr. 15)

VIR EXCELLENTISSIME,

Pater Honoratissime,

...Ceterum quod TIBI mitto ex Electra Sophoclis specimen, Pater Dilectissime, ita se habet. Dixit mihi celeberrimus vir, Gottschedius, in animo sibi esse, facere versionem aliquam poetices Aristotelis,³ eamque suis illustrare meditationibus; sed cupere se addere quoddam ex veteribus exemplum; proposuitque mihi ut Sophoclis Electram in vernaculam linguam verterem.⁴ Fateor alio me tempore antea inter sermones iniecissem mentionem, tentasse me aliquando versionem eius prosaicam, usui atque exercitio meo, eandem vero postea omisisse. Sed voluit versionem poeticam, quanquam sine rythmis eam ut facerem hortatus est. Postquam, ut tentarem saltem, victus sum; nolui tamen versibus istis rythmorum dulcedine destitutis tentare. Equidem scio, pater dilectissime, multa resistere, quibus quo minus eam perficiam possim auocari: tamen videtur mihi non aspernandum, et sub auspiciis magni viri prodire, meosque labores eius vigilationibus coniungi, et quae contra eos quibus poeseos studium curae est inualuisse videtur opinio, negligi ab iis antiquitatis studia, eam a me declinare, et utilem esse fortasse litteris, si Graeci scriptoris, nomine quidem notissime, ceterum a paucissimis

¹ In the *Abhandlung, dass die Nachahmung der Sache, der man nachahmet zuweilen unnötlich werden müsse* (*Werke*, ed. cit., III, 176; *Deutsche Litteraturdenkmale*, 26, p. 104).

² See particularly his remarks on the portrayal of death in the same *Abhandlung* (*Werke*, III, 174. *D.L.D.*, 26, p. 103).

³ Gottsched intended this translation of the *Poetics*, together with translations from Greek plays, to form vol. I of the *Deutsche Schaubühne*. For details and reasons for his abandonment of the plan see Danzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 145 ff.

⁴ Cf. life of Schlegel, *Werke*, ed. cit., v, p. xxii.

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litterarum cultoribus adcuratius cogniti, quaedam in lucem producere, quae ut Graecas litteras diligentius colant, alios possint inuitare. Non possum abstinere, Pater dilectissime, quin, nisi aliter TIBI ista videbuntur, petam abs TE, ut perficere eam versionem mihi liceat.¹ Ita tamen ut si aliter videbuntur eadem animo obsequi TIBI sim paratissimus, semper futurus

Pater Honoratissime

TIBI

obsequentissimus filius

JOANNES ELIAS SCHLEGELIUS.

Lipsiae

d. xx. Mart.

1740.

(2) *Schlegel to his father* (Mrg. CCLXXXI; Special volume, no. 16)

Hochedelgebohrner

Hochgeehrtester Herr Vater

²...Die Uebersetzung der Elektra würde ich in der That ehe ich die Poetische anfang, lieber in Prosa gemacht haben, wenn der Herr Prof. Gottsched nicht lieber reimlose Verse als Prosa hätte haben wollen. Weil ich aber nicht weiss, dass iemand ist, der reimlose Verse im Deutschen gerne zu lesen pflegte, und er gleichwol mich bat sie in Versen zu machen; so ergriff dieses sie auch gereimt zu machen.³ Die RB.⁴ die an dem Rande der prosaischen Uebersetzung sind, rühren gröstentheils nicht von mir, was diejenigen anlangt, die mit Bleystifte gemacht waren, sondern von einigen guten Freunden, die sie vorigen Sommer⁵ gelesen haben, und unterschiedenes dabey erinnerten. Die übrigen aber habe ich, so viel ich mich erinnere mehr eine Antiquität anzumerken, oder die Kunst in

¹ Cf. *Werke*, ed. cit., v, p. xx. J. H. Schlegel states there that his father released Johann Elias from his promise to refrain from poetry and the pursuit of literature before the end of 1739.

² The beginning of this letter (as of no. 1 above) refers to an 'exercise' set by his father on the character of Joseph. This was published (*Werke*, ed. cit., III, 453 ff.) under the title 'Betrachtung über den Charakter Josephs in Ansehung seiner Aufrichtigkeit'.

³ Cf. Schlegel's remarks on unrhymed verse in his *Schreiben an den Herrn N.N. über die Comödie in Versen* (*Werke*, ed. cit., III, especially pp. 86-90; *Deutsche Litteraturdenkmale*, 26, pp. 22-6).

⁴ This is written over A, presumably the initial letter of Anmerkungen.

⁵ This confirms the deductions made by Antoniewicz (*Deutsche Litteraturdenkmale*, 26, introduction, pp. xiii ff.) as to the date of the 'Auszug eines Briefs über die Trauerspiele'. This letter was written to his brother J. Adolf Schlegel, who was still at Schulpforta. In it he remarks that he is translating *Electra* into prose. Schlegel himself left Schulpforta in March 1739. From the letter printed above it is clear that the prose version was ready in the summer of that year. The "Brief über die Trauerspiele" falls then in the spring or early summer of 1739. Antoniewicz dates the verse translation 1741; from these letters to his father 1740 would appear to be more correct.

D'Ovidio, Meyer-Luebke, Grandgent, and other linguists, and to adapt them to the ends of elementary and advanced instruction for classes in Italian linguistics in the colleges and universities of English-speaking countries'. Introductory sections on linguistic science in general, and a sensible account of the passage from Latin to Romance, are followed by chapters on the phonology, morphology, and syntax of Italian. The sections on phonology and morphology are done very competently. Though necessarily brief, they furnish a clear picture of the sounds and forms of the language. Only very few points in these chapters suggest criticism. For instance, it can hardly be said that Dante defined 'the *volgare* as ungrammatical Latin, in the year 1305' (p. 27), since the date of composition of the *De Vulgari Eloquentia* can be fixed only approximately between 1303 and the beginning of 1305. At p. 96 *debbio* (< *debeo*) is given as a hypothetical reconstruction. Actually *debbio* occurs in early Italian texts. The Tommaseo-Bellini Dictionary for instance quotes an example from the *Vita di S. Dorotea*.

It seems a great pity that only very few pages, six in all, besides a few lines in the morphology section, should have been dedicated to syntax. This is particularly regrettable since a historical account of Italian syntax is a pressing *desideratum* of scholarship. Such a neglect of syntax is hardly justifiable on the ground that most points connected with it are 'the literary, deliberate efforts of the chosen few' (p. 113). The literary element is not of such a nature that it can be entirely disregarded in an account of a language: least of all in a language like Italian in which standardization was due practically entirely to literary influence. This brings us to another and equally serious omission. But for a few vague remarks at p. 139, there is no account of the causes that led to the establishment of a *koinè* in Italy. Nor is there anything about the development undergone by Italian since the thirteenth century. Early Italian is altogether sadly neglected throughout the book. The result of all this is that the beginner, for whose benefit this book is primarily intended, will not find here those historical details which are so essential in philological studies, and without which no account of a language can be called complete.

The description of Italian dialects, though necessarily condensed, will prove very valuable to the beginner, as will also the bibliography¹ and the selection of Italic, Latin, and Italian texts. Concerning these texts, their printed sources might have been furnished and, in so far as the *Ritmo Cassinese* is concerned, it would have been preferable to give the

¹ The following works on the Italian language might be added to the bibliography: W. Meyer-Luebke, *Grammatica Storica della Lingua Italiana e dei Dialecti Toscani*, nuova edizione curata da Matteo Bartoli (Torino, 1927); M. Bartoli, *Caratteri Fondamentali della Lingua Italiana e delle Lingue Sorelle*, Miscellanea della Facoltà di Lettere e di Filosofia (Torino, 1936); G. Bertoni, *Storia della Lingua Italiana—Lezioni Raccolte da U. Ciancolo* (Roma, 1934); K. Vossler, 'Italienisch, Französisch, Spanisch, ihre literarischen und sprachlichen Physiognomien', *Zeitwende*, II (1926), 136-63; R. A. Hall, *Bibliography of Italian Linguistics* (Publications of the Linguistic Society of America, Baltimore, 1941). A new edition of Bertoni's *Il Duecento* appeared in 1939. As this edition includes some new chapters, it should have been given instead of the 1930 edition.

text of De Bartholomaeis¹ instead of D'Ovidio's rather arbitrary reconstruction of it. About the *Ritmo*, that it belongs to the twelfth century seems highly doubtful. On palaeographical grounds the unique manuscript of it must be assigned to at least the middle of the thirteenth century, and there are no really valid reasons for attributing the composition of the poem to a much earlier date.²

The weak side of this book is its omissions. None the less it is undeniably a valuable work of exact scholarship embodying the results of recent research, which will prove useful not only to beginners. Teachers of Italian philology will not easily be able to dispense with it.

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LONDON.

Lessing's Laokoon. By F. O. NOLTE. Lancaster, Pa.: Lancaster Press. 1940. 175 pp. \$2.00.

Much the best work on *Laokoon* is of American origin, and the names of Walter, Bryant, Howard and, above all, of Irving Babbitt will be well known to workers in the field. Mr Nolte follows in the best tradition of his distinguished predecessors, and the present work is marked by admirable lucidity, sensitive appreciation, cogent argument and apt illustration, all presented in a language rich in association and finely phrased. *Laokoon* is a book about art, and Mr Nolte boldly examines Lessing's thesis in the light of the most modern thought on the nature of art and of artistic creation. Unlike Babbitt, he brings to his task a judgement that is open-minded as to the respective merits of those indeterminate labels 'classic' and 'romantic'.

Many holes have been picked in Lessing's arguments since Herder started the process within a year of its appearance, and Goethe later joined in the fray. The Romanticists denied the very validity of his premises. But Mr Nolte is not concerned with the narrower issues of Lessing's historical position. As he pertinently remarks: 'You can argue against the *Laokoon*; you cannot argue it away', because 'it is a consummate formulation of principles that may be profitably reckoned with'. Lessing may lay undue stress on the theory of imitation which he had inherited from the Renaissance, but he had at least an inkling of the new romantic theory of creation derived from Shaftesbury when he makes the painter in *Emilia Galotti* surmise that 'Raphael would have been the greatest genius among painters' even 'if he had, unfortunately, been born without hands'. Mr Nolte reminds us, however, of a fact too often forgotten: that the Romantic theory of 'creation' is just as powerless as 'imitation' to account for the fact of *artistic* creation. The Romantic, he points out, is, when he tediously transcribes the things within him, as naturalistic as the realist who tediously transcribes the things without.

¹ V. De Bartholomaeis, *Rime Giullaresche e Popolari D'Italia* (Bologna, 1926), pp. 11-12.

² The same applies to the Venetian inscription given at p. 192. Its attribution to the twelfth century is at least very doubtful.

Each theory has a certain validity, but neither is in itself able to provide the criterion by which art can be distinguished from that which is not art.

This, Mr Nolte maintains with insistence, can only be achieved by a proper appreciation of 'medium'. This is not to say that art consists merely in the artist's mastery over *medium*; equally important is the power of medium over the *artist*, the fascination which it exerts upon his imagination. Imagination in itself is not enough—it is, for instance, present no less in the work of a great astronomer or mathematician. What distinguishes the artist from other men of imagination, and indeed from the craftsman, is his compulsion to imagine in terms of his *medium*. 'It is not the eye of the painter or the sculptor which dictates to his hands; rather it is his hands which guide and educate his eye. For it is his hands which have immediate and vital contact with his medium; and it is from this contact that the truly fashioning impulse comes.' This in no way affects the *ecstasy* of the artist's vision. Werther thinking to enhance this ecstasy cries: 'at present, I could not draw, not even a single line; and yet I was never a greater painter than at this moment'; but he is under a delusion. The question is: In what form does an artist glimpse ecstatic loveliness? That he glimpses it in terms of medium is what distinguishes *artistic* inspiration from other kinds of inspiration. 'Medium', Mr Nolte writes, 'is the *only* source of insight and power which an artist has, and which is denied to all others.' J. M. Thorburn, who is equally convinced that 'the problem of medium is the key to the problem of art', asks in his profoundly suggestive book *Art and the Unconscious* (London, 1925): 'What is art but a synthesis of the most earthy and the most spiritual?', and Goethe, writing to Herder in 1772, recognized the affinity between the artist's creative power and his earthy, sensuous medium: 'An artist is nothing so long as his hands do not work and shape.'

Mr Nolte's recognition of the importance of medium does not lead him into the blind alley of 'pure form'. Art, he knows, can never be divorced from life and human interest. Epstein foresees an exhibition of mere stones as the logical conclusion of preoccupation with material; and Mr Nolte thinks that the entirely abstract is not an advance upon 'representation' as an aesthetic norm but its other extreme. That such experiments in medium have become an end in themselves is due to a confusion of the aesthetic with the merely physical properties of medium; and between these Mr Nolte is at great pains to distinguish.

This is, however, just what Lessing failed to do. When he insists that, because the symbols of poetry are successive, poetry can effectively 'imitate' only things which are successive, he is thinking of the merely physical qualities of articulated sound. The insight gained by seeing medium as the key to the problem of art is invaluable in any appreciation of *Laokoon*, which is itself a treatise on the limitations of artistic media. For it makes it possible to state with a greater degree of accuracy where Lessing went astray. Mr Nolte thinks that, had Lessing proceeded directly to a consistent examination of the 'ways' of the poet and the sculptor he

would inevitably have been led to an analysis of aesthetic media. But is this so certain? Despite Lessing's preoccupation with the purely physical properties of language, he betrays no sense of medium as the material in which the artist works—of him 'shaping' in the moment of his 'seeing'. Mendelssohn, who is much more aware of the sensuous in art, sometimes uses the word 'Materie'; but for Lessing medium is always 'Mittel' (means), and art the conception of some idealized 'bit of nature' communicated by 'Zeichen' (symbols). But it should not be forgotten that Lessing's difficulties are chiefly with the medium of literature, an art which, as Thorburn points out, presents unique difficulties to the student of aesthetics.

Since Mr Nolte so explicitly maintains that art has constant reference to life, what exactly does he mean when he writes that 'the impressions we receive from a work of Tolstoy, a statue of Michel Angelo, or a symphony of Sibelius are altogether different from any sensations which actual experience can ever vouchsafe us'? Does he mean that such impressions are altogether of a different order? Is it not rather that they have a different quality? Have not these impressions derived from art something in common with impressions received in actual experience when, suddenly and without warning, a new relation is temporarily established between us and what we contemplate, a relation characterized by Edward Bullough¹ as intensely personal, but filtered, cleared of the practical, concrete nature of its appeal? Be that as it may, that we question at all is evidence that Mr Nolte has achieved his aim. For he would not claim to have said the last word on art, artistic creation or even on *Laokoon*. Concerned 'not to prove, but to provoke', he writes with conviction and enthusiasm, and his book admirably fulfils the function which he assigns to criticism in general: to stimulate the mind and set it on its way to finding its own solutions.

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LONDON.

Lessings Stellung in der Entfaltung des Individualismus. By FRIEDRICH JOSEPH SCHMITZ. (*University of California Publications in Modern Philology*, XXIII.) Berkeley, California: University of California Press; Cambridge: University Press. 1941. 152 pp.

This new volume of the University of California Publications presents the mind of Lessing in a more attractive light than its slightly forbidding title would suggest. The author's main thesis is the central importance of the problem of the individual in Lessing's philosophy of life, his chief aim to analyse the clues offered in Lessing's own works to the solution of this problem. He rightly emphasizes the futility of attempts to construct from Lessing's statements a systematic and coherent philosophy: 'Das hiesse schliesslich wirklich den lebendigen Lessing verkennen'

¹ "Psychical distance" as a factor in art and as an Aesthetic principle', in *Brit. J. Psychol.* v, 87 (1912).